

A Dragon's Promise

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Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Adventure, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Hiccup, Toothless

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2012-12-21 10:02:13

Updated: 2013-12-24 23:30:52

Packaged: 2016-04-26 14:13:54

Rating: M

Chapters: 7

Words: 27,054

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Now high priest to the dragonknights hiccup must travel the lands and bring together those who oppose Malacath and his power but doing so will not be easy; not when Malacath has followers of his own working to stop hiccup. can hiccup bring together the various people of the land to stand up and fight? or will everything collapse and burn around him? the sequel to A Dragon's Glyph

1. cinderhall

CHAPTER 1

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Hiccup watched as in front of him the road they were traveling on flattened out; as they emerged from the mountains. Next to him he felt Aria shift slightly. "Finally. The trek was longer than I remember it being in my time. There weren't nearly so many hills and valleys." Hiccup shrugged and sped up to keep in line with the small caravan they were traveling with. In front of them Hiccup watched as a family coaxed a set of oxen along. It had been almost 10 days since he'd left his home, and 4 days since they'd been following the trail towards the settlement Aria called Cinderhall. Walking along the ancient stone roadway Hiccup wiped a few beads of sweat from his forehead. Above them the sun shown directly downward, making their shadows follow their bodies closely. As they trudged along the road Hiccup spoke; as he wiped more sweat off his forehead. "remind me again, why we're not just flying to this lord Brayon's castle?" Aria rolled her eyes.

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"you can't just turn into a dragon, fly to lord Brayon's castle land, change back into a human and expect to speak with him. You'd be arrested for witchcraft. Besides the dragonknights have been gone for centuries. It's possible he doesn't even know what a dragonknight is." Hiccup nodded. "ok. So why are we going to cinderhall?" Aria sighed and shifted the pack on her back slightly. "for a few reasons. The main reason is because they're used to be a dragonknight outpost in the forest near the town. If we're lucky then the charms crafted for the dragonknights might still be in the fortress. Once we have those we can present them to lord Brayon and that might convince him to believe us." Again Hiccup nodded. "ok. But why would the charms still be there? The fortress is hundreds of years old surely it's been picked over by looters and scavengers."

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Aria nodded. "I expect it has been. But the charms would have been kept in a special container, one only a dragonknight or someone of great power could open. I'm hoping the container is still there, and still intact." Hiccup looked sideways at her. "and if it's not? Then what?" Aria stopped and adjusted the pack again. "then we'll have to figure something else out." Hiccup nodded and watched as in front of them the wagon they were following stopped. Slowing down slightly Hiccup walked up next to the wagon and spoke to one of the men who was clambering down and off it. "everything ok?" the man nodded. "yes. the oxen grow weary. They have traveled far today. We'll set up camp for the night; and continue onward tomorrow. Will you and your companion be joining us?" Hiccup looked to aria who nodded. "yes. I think so. I'm in no rush to return to cinderhall." The man nodded. "my wife feels the same way. She fears for our daughters' safety." Aria chuckled. "she is a wise women."

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Hiccup watched as the last of the sun's rays dipped behind the mountains, ushering in the night and the cold. Shivering slightly Hiccup tugged the jacket he wore closer to his body as he turned his attention back to the camp. He and the family on the wagon were no longer alone, at least 3 other wagons had joined them and had formed a ring around the large bonfire which had been set ablaze. Even as he

watched a man from one of the other wagons stepped up to the fire and threw in several logs to keep it lit. leaning back Hiccup settled in and watched as the families around him began setting up their wagons for the night. The women had gone off to bathe in a nearby river; he could hear the water splashing. Digging into his pack Hiccup pulled out a small blanket and wrapped himself in it. It was odd; in birk he had always been cold, but now after leaving it he found that the cold no longer seemed to bother him very much. all around him the men were dressed up in thick furs and pelt, and he wore his normal thin shirt pants, and vest. Laying his head down on the blanket; hiccup looked up at the stars above him. they shown downwards at him like gems just out of reach in the sky.

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His moment of reverie was broken however when a vice called his name. "Hiccup!" looking up Hiccup smiled as one of the men; a tall, lanky man with a beard waved to him. "come join us." Smiling Hiccup got up and moved to join the group; who laughed at a joke another man had just told. Sitting down in front of the fire Hiccup found a mug of ale pushed into his hand almost at once. "drink Hiccup. Tis a fine night to celebrate. After all tis Yorvask's day!" at these words a round of applause erupted and all the other men drank down some of their own ale. Putting the cup to his lips Hiccup drank a few small mouthfuls, swallowing them down and feeling them land in his stomach. For a moment he felt a warm kind of heat erupt into his stomach. A second later Dremven's voice spoke in his mind. _'hmmmm. Mortal fire water.' _This had happened a few other times but he was pulled from it when another man spoke.

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"So tell us Hiccup. Where is it you and your companion travel to? We know you seek to stop at cinderhall but then were to?" Hiccup shrugged. "Aria and I are making our way to lord Brayon's castle; we haveâ€¦business there." The men nodded. "a fine destination. I wish you well on your business." Hiccup nodded and drank a bit more ale before responding. "I think you. but tell me what is your destination?" the men dove into their explanations. Some were traveling back to their homes to see their families, while a few others were heading north to do trade with the tribes that lived up there, and in one case going to a shrine to pray and complete their pilgrimage. As they all took another drink the bushes next to the camp began to shake and rustle. Almost at the same time all the men's hands went to their swords or daggers. But they relaxed as the bushes parted and the women returned from their bathes.

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Hiccup smiled as Aria sat down on the ground next to him and took the mug from his hand before downing some of the ale herself. "hmmmm. Not bad. Needs some honey in it though." The men laughed. Slowly the group began to disband many of the men returning to their wagons with their wives to sleep. Soon enough Hiccup found himself and Aria alone. Looking back up at the stars Hiccup spoke. "shall we go to bed?" Aria smiled and nodded before finishing off the mug of ale; and setting it on a nearby crate. Moving away from a camp a little Hiccup watched as Aria stepped into the small tent them had constructed so she could get changed. Stepping away from the tent Hiccup to began to disrobe, first pulling off his shirt, then his pants, and gloves leaving him in only his underwear. Turning back to the tent Hiccup found that Aria had reopened the tent and was allowing him to come inside. Laying down on the ground Hiccup paused for a moment as Aria caught his attention. Her skin had darkened since they left birk; giving her the look of someone who worked out in the fields.

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Her clothes from the day were folded and sitting at the foot of her sleeping bag, meaning she too was in only her underwear. Trying not to let that last thought take hold of him Hiccup turned so he was facing away from Aria before closing his eyes and allowing himself to drift off to sleep; and a dream where he had allowed his last thought to take over.

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THE NEXT DAY

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The first sign they were getting close to cinderhall was the lack of trees. As they came to the top of a hill Hiccup felt his eyes widen as he found that almost all of the trees had been cut down and cleared away, giving way to a large plain that stretched on for several miles. Continuing along the dirt road Hiccup could not help but notice other signs of a human presence. Some large piled of rocks and boulders that did not belong in the middle of a field, the crumbling remains of an old cobble stone fence, a few rusted old tools layed down and abandoned on the road. As they moved on Hiccup felt himself shiver. It wasâ€|unnerving. Walking over another Hiccup Hiccup felt Aria tug at his sleeve and point. Following her gesture hiccup found she was pointing to a large structure off in the distance. "it's an ore crane. The miners use it to haul up the ore they dig out of the ground." Hiccup nodded.

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"soâ€|.what is cinderhall like?" it was something he'd been curious about for a while; and now seemed as good a time as any to ask. Next t him Aria sighed and began walking again. "to you and me it will seemâ€|.like a prison; but it's more like hell. The miners are forced to work long hours, when they aren't working they're either asleep, or try to buy supplies for their families. But the price of the supplies varies on an almost daily basis, so they have no way of knowing if they have enough money to buy the food for that night's meals. It's not uncommon for people who are desperate to resort to theft to make ends meet." Hiccup felt his heart clench. "why don't they just trade with the traders who come through; like we are?" Aria shook her head sadly.

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"their money has no sway to outisders." When Hiccup looked confused she elaborated. "the money you and I have is struck from gold or silver. They're precious metals that will always have value to others. The miners are paid in copper bits. They can only spend them at the stores in the camps. And even if they did find a merchant willing to trade with them; it would take more bits than a miner would earn in a year; to have anything of value to an outsider." Hiccup nodded sadly. "who would agree to that kind of life?" again Aria sighed. "most of them were tricked. They're immigrants who were brought over here by the mining corporations. They were told they have to pay back the cost it took to bring them here; but they weren't told how much that was. They also have to pay for lodgings, and all their supplies. At the end of the month most people are still short money; so they have to stay in the camps and keep working. It's a hellish life. Even in my time this was going on."

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Hiccup looked away from Aria not wanting her to see the furious tears that were welling up in his eyes. quickly wiping them away he spoke; willing his voice to not shake. "why didn't you put a stop to it? The dragonknights I mean, why didn't they do anything about it?" Aria shook her head. "where do you think our power comes from? Yes we have magic, but we cannot act on the land without the king's permission. And he did not grant us power in cinderhall. We did what we could; set up financial aid to those who needed it the most; offered healing and concealing, and even smuggled people out who were desperate. The only problem is that in cinderhall, everyone is desperate." Hiccup opened his mouth to speak but was cut off by a loud echoing ringing sound. Covering his ears Hiccup waited for the bell to stop tolling

before speaking again. "what the hell was that?" Aria smiled weakly. "the traveler's bell. The guards ring it when they spot a traveler on the roads. This way the guards can watch them and be sure they aren't trying to smuggle workers out, or bring in contraband."

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Coming to the top of another hill Hiccup stopped as the town of cinderhall came into view; below them. Dozens of large wooden cranes dotted the hillsides. Next to the cranes enormous pits had been dug which Hiccup could only guess were the mines. And all around the mines buildings had been crammed in; each one looking as though it pressed right against the others for support to stay upright. Moving down the hill Hiccup watched as the main gate of cinderhall loomed in front of them. coming to stop in front of it, Hiccup and Aria joined a small group of people and wagons who had gathered in front of the large metal doors. After a few moments a voice from above them shouted down at them. "STAND BACK! WE'RE OPENING THE DOORS!" doing as they were told the group moved away from the door. Hiccup flinched and clamped his hands to his ears as the heavy metal doors slowly swung open; grinding and squeaking as they did so.

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He wasn't sure what he had expected to see when the door opened up, but what he did see was a line of men dressed in armor blocking their path; a halberd clutched in soldier's hands. After another moment a man in a silk tunic stepped forward and began to speak to them in a rough voice. "I am guard master Tow. I report directly to Hurleximus Roach himself; the high lord of cinderhall. I am the law in this town. If you break the law you will be imprisoned, and if you continue to break the law you'll be put to work in the mines to pay off your debts. Does everyone understand?" the group let out a murmur of understanding. "good. Now there are 5 main laws here in cinderhall follow them and we will not have trouble. 1. DO NOT STEAL. Anyone caught will be instantly imprisoned. 2. STAY IN DESIGNATED OUTSIDER AREAS. If you find yourself lost seek out a guardsman and they will direct you back. but do not wander off. 3. DO NOT DEAL WITH THE BLACK MARKET. If you find, or hear of someone dealing with those criminals you are to report them at once. 4. DO NOT INTERFEAR WITH THE MINER'S WORK. 5. SMUGGLING ANYTHING IN OR OUT OF CINDERHALL IS A CAPITAL OFFENCE. You will be put to death if you are caught. UNDERSTAND?"

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Again the crowd murmur it's understanding. Tow smiled; Hiccup

suppressed a shudder as he did so; his teeth looked horrible. "good. Now follow the guard procession. They'll take you to the inn where you'll be staying." Falling in line behind Aria Hiccup slowly trudged through the streets of cinderhall. He could not help but continue to to feel unnerved. It feltâ€|wrong; very wrong. Unlike the road they had been traveling on Cinderhall's roads were dirt, yet it did ot feel like dirt when they're feet hit the ground; it felt like mud, and not just any mud but mud that gripped your foot when you tried to pick it up. every sound the group made seemed to echo off the buildings which rose so far above him that they seemed to almost press down on him; making him feel very small. But the worst thing was the emptiness. The streets seemed to be completely abandoned. Beside the group they were in and the guards leading them there seemed to not be another soul traveling. Every now and then Hiccup would catch a glimpse of a face in a building window; but that face would vanish before he could even focus on it. Surpressing another shudder Hiccup turned his attention downward and focused on putting one foot in front of the other until they reached the inn.

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As they came to a stop one of the guards spoke. "if you have animals they can be stabled in the back. for now go in and make yourself comfortable; the mines will be open for another 3 hours, if you have any business to take care of do it before they close. There will be guards posted here at the hotel to ensure you are following our laws. Remember you are our guests; it is our duty to keep you safe and be sure you're following our laws. Following Aria Hiccup stepped through the creaking wooden door and into the inn. The first thing that grabbed him was how dreary everything was. Grey floors, grey walls, eve grey ceilings. The room they were in was some kind of bar. Tables and stools had been set up; in l corner a few musical instruments had been left for anyone with the skill; to play them. Moving through the room Hiccup noted that every step they took made the wooden floor creak as they made their way to the main counter where an old women stood waiting for them. as they neared her Hiccup felt his eyes widen. She looked half dead Her skin was a pale grey color; in fact it seemed to match the room. Her eyes were dull and her hair was pulled back into a bun in an attempt to make it look presentable; a feat that was lost by all the split ends, and fly aways that stuck out.

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"can I help you dearies?" Hiccup looked down at the floor. Even the women's voice sounded depressing; as though she was resigned to the fact that she was stuck here. Aria leaned over the counter. "I'd like to rent a day." The women nodded. "would you like one bed or two?" Aria smiled at her. "l please." The women nodded and pulled out an ancient dust covered tome; that would have not looked out of place in ignorance's library. "sigh the registry and then that'll cost you 3

gold pieces." Aria nodded and smiled as the women handed her a quill to write with. A moment later aris handed the women some gold coins only to have the women drop a rusting old key into Aria's hand. Hiccup could not help but feel a bit sad to see the gold go; he'd traded one of the men on the road his dagger for that gold. As Aria handed him the key she continued to speak. "my friend and I are fond of spirits. Any place in town that we could get a strong drink?" the women looked at Aria for a moment before speaking.

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"the iron mug down the street. It sells the strongest spirits in town." Aria smiled and shook hands with the women before leading Hiccup out of the room and up a small narrow spiral staircase. Finding their room wasn't hard, the floor above the bar seemed to hold all the guest rooms and soon enough Hiccup was dropping his pack onto an ancient looking bed; that creaked and looked like it might fall apart from the pack's weight. "don't get to comfortable." Hiccup looked up at Aria; who was gazing out the grimy covered window that looked out over the empty streets. "the moment the mines close the workers are gunna flood the streets and we'll make a break for it." Hiccup cocked his head. "a break for where exactly?" Aria jerked her head out the window. "out of the designation area and into the slums and housing sections of cinderhall." Hiccup felt his eyes widen. "the guards said to stay here. Beside what's in that section that isn't here?"

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Aria shook her head and looked at him. "no, you don't get it. So long as we stay in this section of the city the guards can just watch us until we leave. But what we need is information, and it's not the kind that you can get here. If we can get into the housing section of cinderhall we can stay with one of the families there and search for the information we want; while at the same time avoiding the guards and even help out those that are stuck in this hell hole." Hiccup stood up and moved over to the window. "how can we help them?" Aria sighed. "because we can pay them to house us. The gold spent in this section of the city goes straight into Hurleximus roach's pocket. Where as if we spend it in the slums it will stay there and hopefully help them. Does that make sense?" Hiccup nodded. "so what do we do until then?" Aria shook her head sadly. "there's not much we can do. The guards are watching the hotel, if we leave they'll follow us. That's why we need to crowds, so we can lose the guards and move around unseen. For nowâ€¦|..meditate. it's about all we can do right now.

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And with that Aria pushed away from the window moved over to the center of the room and sat down while closing her eyes. sighing Hiccup gave the window one last look before joining Aria on the floor in meditation. He had just closed his eyes when he felt Aria's fingers work their way between his. looking at him she spoke. "thank you, for being here with me. I don't like being back here. It makes me sick to my stomach. I hate what goes on here, that no one does anything about it. There will be times you'll have to stop me from reacting, and times I'll have to stop you. just know thatâ€¦..just my being in here we've given it's people hope. There's more free gold in the city now then there was yesterday. Ok?" Hiccup nodded and closed his eyes. he expected aria to let go of his hand. He was very happy when she did not.

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><p>AN: WELL FOLKS. IT'S HERE. I HOPE YOU'VE ALL ENJOYED THIS FIRST CHAPTER AND I HOPE TO GET LOTS OF REVIEWS AND COMMENTS. (HINT, HINT)<p>

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I HOPE I DESCRIBED CINDERHALL WELL. WE'LL GET EVEN MORE DESCRIPTION IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.

FOR THE RECORD I KIND OF PICTURE IT LIKE AN OLD WEST TOWN BUT WITHOUT THE GUNS AND COWBOYS.

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THIS IS NOT MY MAIN STORY SO I CANT SAY HOW REGULARLY UPDATES WILL COME. I'M ALSO JUGGLING TRYING TO GO TO COLLEGE, WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE.

pLUS I'M TRYING TO KEEP EVERYTHING ORIGINAL AND NOT 'BORROW' FROM OTHER SOURCES.

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HOPE EVERYONE HAS ENJOYED IT AND I HOPE TO SEE SOME COMMENTS.

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HA I GOT IT UP BEFORE THE WORLD ENDED! (12/21/2012)

2. housing and corperate agents

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CHAPTER 2

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Hiccup downed the last of the liquid in the mug in front of him. turning he winced slightly as the whistle cut through the relatively silent air, signaling the end of the work day. Next to him Aria shifted, and finished the last bit of meat in front of her. they'd staid in their room for a few hours, before hunger had gotten to them. so they'd come back downstairs and ordered something from the bar. The food was alright. Hiccup could tell just from the way it was prepared that it had been salt dried to preserve it; meaning the meat was probably not fresh. Several minutes after the whistle had sounded; the sound of shuffling feet met Hiccup's ears. It took only another moment before he saw the workers coming in from the mines. Following Aria; Hiccup got off his seat and followed her to the front door of the bar, seeming to look as though he was just interested in the approaching crowd. As the workers came into sight it took all of his self control to not cry. The workers lookedâ€|defeated. There was no other way to describe it.

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Their clothes showed obvious signs of wear and tear. Hiccup could easily see where the cloth had been torn, sewn up, and then torn again, only to be repaired again. The miner's skin was pale, and Hiccup could only guess that was because they were stuck under the ground and not outside in the sunlight. Very few of them were speaking. To each other instead a chorus of groans and moan filled the air, and made it sound as though a hoard of insects was coming at them. Hiccup looked to Aria who was obviously upset. "you gunna be ok?" Aria nodded as she composed herself. "yes. once the crowd is upon us we'll leave the inn, and make our way to the bar down the street. From there we can find someone to house us. Understand?" Hiccup nodded and readied himself as the crowd came nearer.

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As the first few rows of workers passed by the bar Hiccup and Aria moved. Falling in line behind Aria, Hiccup ducked low so the guard's watching the inn would not notice them. weaving in and out of the crowd Hiccup found that the workers barely seemed to notice them. instead they seemed to focus on simply getting home or reaching their destination. Soon enough Hiccup and Aria found themselves at the bar. Stepping through the door Hiccup took small comfort in finding that some of the workers had come in and were sitting at the tables. Many of them had mugs of alcohol in front of them. however as they moved through the bar Hiccup noticed something. Despite having mugs of drink in front of them the miners did not drink. Instead they sat in the chairs, their eyes closed, they're breathing deep and ragged. As though they were simply too tired to drink.

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Biting his lip Hiccup took a seat next to Aria who had sat down in front of the bar. Unlike the inn the bartender here was younger; a strong but slender man, who looked up at them as they sat down. "don't get many outsiders here. Guards don't like them coming in here." Aria nodded. "we know. But we don't really care what they want. We seek somethingâ€¦different. than drink or food."the man shifted his weight to his other leg and looked at them. "other than food or drink? We're no brothel, but should you desire a whore I'm sure one could be found to suit your liking." Hiccup felt his face flush red as Aria shook his head. "no. we seekâ€¦" Aria leaned in so only the bartender would hear them. "housing, for a week. We can and will gladly pay the person or persons who house us for our stay." The bartender leaned back and glared down at them. Hiccup could not help but feel slightly nervous. If the bartender took offence to their offerâ€¦

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But after a moment the bartender sighed. "few would agree to it. Even with gold pay. The punishment for harboring an outsider is severe, 5 years in the mines. No sunlight or fresh air. Few would be willing to risk that." Hiccup watched as Aria's shoulders slumped slightly. "however, there are a fewâ€¦who have nothing to lose from committing such a crime. People with no fear are a dangerous lot." Aria nodded. "my companion and I are also dangerous, in our own ways." The bartender smiled, Hiccup shuddered as he found that many of the man's teeth were rotted or a nasty shade of yellow. "then perhaps you will feel at home with such people. Very well, I shall spread the word to those who may be able to help. Stay here, and I'll see what I can do." Aria nodded and turned to Hiccup as the bartender walked away from them. "keep your eyes open. There is a small reward for turning in outsiders. Should the guards come in here we may have to slip up to escape. If that happens we'll meet back in our room at the inn. Ok?" Hiccup nodded.

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As time ticked on Hiccup could not help but look around the bar they now sat it. It defiantly seemed to be a bit seedier than the bar at the inn. Unlike the inn the bar was the color of dirt. Hiccup could see bits of uneven wood, and half hammered in nails, in the construction of the building. To be honest it looked like something that had been thrown together on a whim; with no real thought to how long it would stand for. Of course Hiccup had a sneaking suspicion that the people of power in cinderhall had simply built the building and then left it to the miners to run. The bar seemed to be waking up. more people had come in and now some faintly, badly out of tune music was coming from a small group of people who had picked up a few dusty instruments and were now playing them. looking up Hiccup found that the stairs leading upwards led to a balcony that ran the length of the bar. Up there more miners leaned against the railing looking down at the first floor.

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Listening to the tune Hiccup jumped slightly as the voice of the bartender spoke; pulling him from his gazings and back to the bar. "found someone. His name is Sal. He's down at the end of the bar." Aria smiled and moved to get up; only to have the bartender clear his throat. "I think a little compensation is in order. After all I could have turned you in." Aria rolled her eyes and dropped a single gold coin in the bartender's outstretched hand. Following Aria Hiccup moved down to the other end of the bar and sat down; looking towards Sal; who looked at them for a moment before drinking from the mug in front of him. Sal was like the bartender; skinny but muscular. He was a hat over his head; he wore a greyish blue shirt with simple brown pants; both of which seemed to be in slightly better quality than what others wore. "soâ€|.." Sal's voice sounded raspy, as though he'd been talking all day without anything to drink. "Johnny tells me you're looking for a place to stay?"

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Aria nodded. "yes. we have business here that would go smoother if we were not under the constant eye of the guards." Sal grinned, reveling a mouth with several missing teeth. "sounds like something that could get you and myself into trouble. What kind of compensation am I looking at for this?" Aria leaned in a bit closer; next to her Hiccup did the same. "we'll pay you 30 gold coins to let us stay with you for a week." Sal shook his head. "30 coins isn't enough to bribe my way out the shit hole I call a neighborhood. 70 coins, is the least I'll take." Hiccup coughed slightly out of shock. Back in birk the most coins he'd ever had at a single time was 50. Next to him Aria

shook her head. "no. we don't have that much." Sal leaned back on his seat as he drank from his mug again. "then I guess this aint gunna happen." Sal moved to get up but Aria grabbed his arm. "we may not have gold. But I know there is something else I can tempt you with." Sal glared at her for a moment. "I'm married girly. Don't think you can tempt me with your body."

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This time it was Aria's turn to glare back. "my body is not something you could afford even if it was for sale. However it is not. As for what I can tempt you with; days off." That seemed to change Sal. Who sat back down and stared at her. "that's a reward that comes with its own risk." Aria nodded. "I know. And it's one I'm willing to pay if I'm caught. Since you're still here I'm going to guess you're willing to pay it too." For a long moment Sal looked at her before nodding. "make your offer." Aria smiled. "we'll pay youâ€¦.15 gold coins, we'll feed ourselves, and I'll work your shift forâ€¦.3 days, in the mines." Sal smiled and offered Aria his hand. "you have yourself a deal." As Aria shook his hand however Sal's head turned sharply towards the door, and he let go of Aria's hand almost instantly. Following his gaze Hiccup found that the music had stopped and the bar had gone almost completely silent.

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2 newcomers had entered the bar; however they were unlike anyone Hiccup had ever seen before. they wore jet black cloaks, and tunics. Over their faces they wore plain white masks. As he watched them they stepped through the bar; the miners parting for them as though they were afraid to touch them. a moment later the newcomers stood in front of Hiccup and Aria; Sal seemed to have vanished into thin air. "what are you doing here?" Aria rolled her eyes. "having a drink with my friend." Aria gestured to Hiccup who smiled at the men. "you don't have a drink in front of you." Aria nodded. "I know. I finished my first one. now I'm waiting for my sec-" but Aria stopped talking as the bartender from before slid a mug down the bar and into her hand. "sorry about the wait." Aria smiled at him, and lifted the drink to her mouth before drinking some of it. The men in front of them remained silent for a moment before speaking. "very well. Finish your drink and then return to the inn. Curfew is almost in effect."

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A second later the men simply seemed to dissolve into the air, leaving the bar with an uneasy feeling about it. In the next few minutes most of the miners had left the bar, practically run over

each other to get out. turning to Aria Hiccup spoke. "who were those people?" Aria sighed and set the mug back down on the bar. "Corporate agents. Basically spies for the mining companies. We had them back in my time, although they weren't able to evaporate like that. someone must have tipped them off that we were here. We'll need to be careful. They're probably waiting outside the bar for us; to be sure we've left." Aria turned to the bartender who handed her a scrap of paper. "a map to Sal's place." Aria nodded. "you got a back door here." The bartender shook his head. "no. but we got something better, follow me. "

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Following the bartender Hiccup and Aria moved from the bar, down a hallway and into what appeared to be a store room. Watching the bartender Hiccup's eyes widened slightly as he bent down and pulled back a small rug revealing a handle to a trap door. "we built these tunnels so people could get away from tax collectors. But they'll work for you to. This tunnel will make you come up in the general store down the streets. From there follow the map. When you get to Sal's knock and tell him he owes me 4 bits for the drink. Aria nodded. "thanks." The bartender shrugged. "hurry up and go. The agents will be back soon." Aria nodded and clambered down into the tunnel; Hiccup followed her kneeling down so he could fit into the tunnel which was not much bigger than a large barrel. Dropping to his knees Hiccup found himself and Aria plunged into darkness as the bartender shut the trap door. Beginning to shuffle forward Hiccup did his best to make as little noise as possible. About 30 into the tunnel however he froze as somewhere behind them something let off a loud crash.

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A second later voices were shouting. 'WHERE ARE THEY!?' speeding up their movements Hiccup and Aria soon reached the other end of the tunnel and pushed up the trap door above them; clambered out of the tunnel and into the store room of the general store. Recovering the trapdoor, Hiccup and Aria did they best to look unnoteworthy as they walked into the general store and back out into the street. Glancing in the direction of the bar they had come from Hiccup felt his heart clench as he found a large group of guard's had appeared and were ransacking the place looking for them. but he had no time to think about that. Following Aria through the streets Hiccup began to notice that the longer they walked, the dirtier and more run down the city seemed to become. In the back of his mind he could not help but be amazed that anyone was able to live in this city. The city seemed to decay around them as they moved deeper and deeper into it; following the map Sal had drawn them. the mud under their boots became licker and more rancid, and the air seemed to take on a horrible smell that reminded Hiccup of stagnant sewage. Even the mud under their feet seemed to reflect that small; at least Hiccup prayed it was mud he was stepping through.

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Coming to a stop Hiccup looked up at the house they had come to. Hiccup noted the crumbling mortar and bricks, the lack of windows and horrible grey color. Moving up to the door Hiccup knocked on the door. A moment later a woman answered it. "yes?" "the bartender says Sal owes him 4 bits." A moment later the door opened and Sal motioned for them to come inside. As they did so Hiccup heard him speak. "hurry up. half the city guards are looking for you." as the door closed behind him Hiccup looked around. The house was dim and a bit cluttered but it was certainly better than the outside. Following Sal down a hallway Hiccup and Aria soon found themselves in a small dining room; where a few other people were. Sitting down at a small rickety table Sal gestured to the other people as he spoke. "my wife, Miropy, and my daughter Neya." Hiccup smiled at the 2 girls who smiled weakly back. "you have a lovely home." Hiccup knew it was a bad lie; and the others seemed to know it too; but they seemed to appreciate the gesture.

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Aria stepped forward and put her hand on the table; when she lifted it 15 shiny gold coins seemed to glow on top of the dark dusty wood of the table. Hiccup watched as the daughter Neya leaned over the coins and spoke. "daddyâ€¦what is this?" the question struck a nerve with Hiccup. It was wrong, wrong that this girl who looked only 3 years younger than him did not know what money was. "that, Neya is the key to getting your mother and you out of this hell hole." Neya continued to stare at the gold coins. "how? They don't look like any bit I've ever seen." This time it was Hiccup who spoke; and he did so in a slightly harsh voice, that seemed to surprise even Aria. "it's not a bit, it's coin, real money. Not the trash the mining companies pay you with." For a second Neya continued to look at the coins before looking up at Hiccup. "you meanâ€¦outside money? Like from beyond the mines?" Hiccup nodded. Neya seemed to become even more enraptured by the coins, going so far as to reach out and touch the side of the one of the coins.

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From his spot at the table Sal spoke. "what kind of business do you have here in cinderhall? What kind of business requires you to avoid guards and risk imprisonment?" Aria smiled. "we're here to claimâ€¦an inheritance of sorts. Left to me by my old family." Sal chuckled. "there is no such thing as an inheritance in cinderhall. Everything belongs to the mining companies, and they can take it back at anytime." This time it was Aria who chuckled. "then I guess it is a

good thing that my family lived outside Cinderhall's walls. On the other side of the kros forests." Sal looked started for a moment before speaking. 'then you have my deepest condolences." Hiccup cocked his head. "why is that?" Sal shifted in his seat before speaking. "because your inheritance now sits on the other side of the black forest. and no one who walks into that forest and out of sight of cinderhall has ever walked back out."

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><p>AN: WELL FOLKS CHAPTER 2 IS UP AND DONE.<p>

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MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!

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NOW WE'VE SEEN JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE OF CINDERHALL. NEXT CHAPTER WE'LL SEE EVEN MORE.

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LOOKS LIKE HICCUP AND ARIA NOW HAVE A PLACE TO STAY.

BUT NOW THE CORPORATE AGENTS ARE LOOKING FOR THEM. YOU HAVE TO WONDER HOW THE AGENTS CAN VANISH AND REAPPEAR LIKE THAT?

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ALSO WHAT ARE HICCUP AND ARIA GOING TO DO ABOUT THE BLACK FOREST?

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YOU'LL HAVE TO READ THE FUTURE CHAPTERS TO FIND OUT.

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HOPE TO SEEM LOTS OF REVIEWS AND COMMENTS. YAY I'M UP TO 15 WATCHERS FOR THIS STORY, LETS SEE IF WE CAN GET THE NUMBER EVEN HIGHER!

3. hags and miners

BEFORE WE BEGIN THIS CHAPTER I WOULD LIKE TO STOP AND TAKE A MOMENT TO THANK nmmiiscool WHO IS GOING BACK TO MILITARY SCHOOL.

SALUTE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICES TO THIS COUNTRY.

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NOW ON TO THE CHAPTER.

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From his spot at the table Sal spoke. "what kind of business do you have here in Cinderhall? What kind of business requires you to avoid guards and risk imprisonment?" Aria smiled. "we're here to claim an inheritance of sorts. Left to me by my old family." Sal chuckled. "there is no such thing as an inheritance In Cinderhall. Everything belongs to the mining companies, and they can take it back at anytime." This time it was Aria who chuckled. "then I guess it is a good thing that my family lived outside Cinderhall's walls. On the other side of the kros forests." Sal looked started for a moment before speaking. 'then you have my deepest condolences." Hiccup cocked his head. "why is that?" Sal shifted in his seat before speaking. "because your inheritance now sits on the other side of the black forest. and no one who walks into that forest and out of sight of cinderhall has ever walked back out."

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CHAPTER 3

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Hiccup felt aria shift next to him. "what do you mean?" Sal shrugged and shifted from his spot at the table. "they say that the forest is cursed. My dad told me once something about a sect of warriors having some huge battle. so many people died. it cursed. or. released something. No one even lives in that part of the city anymore. And even the corporate agents won't go there unless they have to. You're better off just forgetting about that inheritance girly." Next to him hiccup felt aria shift again. "that's not an option. I need it." Sal opened his mouth to speak but was cut off as another loud whistle blasted through the air. As the sound died down Sal continued. "curfew is in effect. Everyone go to bed. I'll help our guests get settled and then I'll be up. Ok?" behind him Sal's wife and daughter nodded and left the kitchen. Hiccup moved aside as Sal waked past them and opened up a withered old door leading to a small pantry. "you'll have to sleep in here. Since you're not allowed to be here we can't exactly let you sleep out where someone might see you." Aria nodded. "it's fine. Just bring us a blanket and a pillow. We'll be good."

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A short while later hiccup found himself pulling off his shirt and

setting it on one of the empty shelves, feeling a slight pang of guilt at how empty the shelf was. Across the room he could not help but blush slightly as he watched Aria wiggle her hips, as she pulled down her pants and put them on another shelf; her shirt soon following. Leaving them both in only their underwear. Hiccup felt his blush deepen as Aria turned and caught his eye. He could not denyâ€¦..she lookedâ€¦amazing. "hey hey hey. Keep it in your pants boy." Hiccup jumped slightly in shock as Sal appeared in the entrance to the pantry; a moldy old blanket in his hand and a dusty old pillow under his arm. "there will be no hanky panky here tonight. Do I make myself clear?" both hiccup and Aria nodded and hiccup took the blanket and pillow from Sal; who closed the door sending them into darkness. Laying the blanket and pillow on the floor, hiccup knelt down and allowed Aria to crawl into the makeshift bed first before crawling in behind her. For a moment he thought about just laying there, but he decided against it. Instead he reached out and wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her body close to his before whispering to her. "goodnight." From the darkness he heard her whisper back. "goodnight."

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it would not be an easy night of sleep. the house creaked and moaned, every so often hiccup would wake to the sound of someone shifting around in the house. the whole atmosphere around him seemed to press down on him. every now and then aria would shift, and hiccup felt himself blush slightly as she rolled onto her other side so she could nuzzle closer to him for warmth. He felt himself blush a little more as her breasts pushed up against his chest. It was true she was beautiful, smart, funny, and more skilled than any other girl he'd ever met; save for maybe Astrid. He knew loved her, he had no doubt about that. And yetâ€¦something had changed. When she had been a dragon things had been set. He loved her but he knew nothing would ever come of it, after all he was human and she was a dragon. But nowâ€¦.now she was human, and although he was drawn to her he could not help but feelâ€¦uncertain about how to proceed. But his worries and his feelings were pushed out of his mind as he fell asleep.

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BIRK

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Astrid sighed and looked down at the village from her spot on the roof of her house. Things had changed since hiccup hadâ€¦.leftâ€¦..the village had been thrown into a kind of chaos. The

village elders had ordered the village to go on lock down. Everyone who went outside the walls was isolated when they came back, and subjected to several rituals to excise any demons or spirits, that may have latched onto them. And no one was being allowed to leave the village unless it was to hunt or gather wood. Things had become tense, people were paranoid, and worse than that they were scared. Sighing again Astrid watched as hiccup's father, lugged several logs of wood towards his hut. Making her way down Astrid smiled and grabbed the other end of the log. Stoick smiled weakly at her. "thank you lass." Astrid smiled back and helped Stoick haul the log into the main room of his hut. As they set the log down Astrid spoke. "thank you lass. Normally hiccup helps me withâ€¦." But Stoick broke off as his voice died at the mention of hiccup. Taking the moment Astrid spoke. "it's ok Stoickâ€¦how have you been?" they were dancing around the subject, trying not to discuss hiccup. "I've beenâ€¦.can I confess something to you lass?"

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Astrid watched as Stoick shifted from one leg to another. For a moment Stoick didn't speak then, "I wonder sometimes if this is my fault. I meanâ€¦..he was always different. He never cared for fighting or weapons like other children did." Astrid nodded. She could remember a much younger hiccup always with a book instead of running around in the dirt and wrestling with the other children. "did I drive him to this? Iâ€¦..I left him here alone; While I went out and fought dragons. Should I haveâ€¦..been more supportive? Should I haveâ€¦" but Stoick's voice died down. Astrid sighed and shook her head. "Stoick this isn't your fault. Hiccup made his choice. If he wants to throw himself in with spirits and demons and dragons then that was his choice to make." Stoick nodded, and sniffed back a few tears. "thanks lassâ€¦.it's not been easy. First I lost his mother, now himâ€¦the house just seemsâ€¦..so empty now. I used to look forward to the day when hiccup would move out and into a place of his ownâ€¦.maybe with a girl." Astrid chuckled slightly, as did Stoick.

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"can I show you something lass?" Astrid nodded and followed Stoick down a small hallway and into hiccup's room. "after he leftâ€¦..i went though his room." Astrid nodded and looked over the small room, hiccup's clothing had been pulled out the dresser and now lay in a large pile on the small bed, hiccup's desk had been pulled apart and now sat buried under a large stack of papers. Walking past Stoick Astrid picked up the top paper and looked at it. It seemed to be a diagram of the human body, with a series of tattoos drawn over the human's arms, legs, chest, and face. "what is all this stuff?" behind her Stoick shook his head. "I don't know. He was studying something. There are dozens of papers and diagrams about this tattoo, but I don't know what it means." Astrid looked up at Stoick. "would you mind if I went over this stuff? Maybe I'll figure something out that

you didn't" Stoick shrugged. "I don't mind lass. Do what you want justâ€|don't delve to deeply. Something about all this drew in hiccup and made him what he is now, I don't want the same thing to happen to you." Astrid nodded and sat down at the desk, as she did so she felt Stoick leave the room. a moment later he returned a small candle in his hand. Taking the candle from Stoick; Astrid set it down on the desk and began to go over the papers stacked on hiccup's desk.

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CINDERHALL

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Hiccup shifted and groaned as he felt Aria move next to him. Opening one eye hiccup watched as Aria sat up, yawned, stretched, and then began to pull on some clothes that had been set out for her. The clothes were ratty and after she pulled on the shirt she looked just like one of the miners who had lived here their whole life. Sitting up on the floor hiccup spoke. "why are you wearing those clothes?" Aria smiled. "good morning. I'm taking Sal's place in the mines today, I have to look like a miner, otherwise I'd be caught and arrested." Hiccup nodded and watched as Aria picked up a length of ragged cloth and wrapped it around her head, hiding her face from view. After adjusting the cloth Aria spoke again. "you'll want to get up. We've got about 10 minutes until every goes to work and school. You'll have to use that time to get to the abandoned part of the city and get into the forests, and find the old dragonknight fort, and find those charms." hiccup nodded. "okâ€|.but remind me again why we need the charms."

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Aria sighed. "the charms signify that we are in fact dragonknights. Without it for all the king knows we're just shape shifters or demons. Just find them." Hiccup nodded. "ok. And why are we going to the king and not to the oathkeepers like Rowena said we should?" Aria sighed again; and hiccup couldn't help but feel a like he was irritating her. "we only have as much authority as the king grants us. Without that authority we're just travelers who happen to know magic. With it we're official dragonknights. Now come on, get dressed and wake up." As she finished speaking Aria threw another pair of ragged clothe to him. Watching her leave the pantry hiccup groaned as he stood up and pulled on his clothes; soon following Aria out into the kitchen of the house. As they entered the kitchen they found Sal sitting at the rickety table sipping a small cup of some steaming liquid. A dusty old plate with the remains of his breakfast in front

of him, next to him Sal's daughter sat; still eating her own breakfast. Behind both of them Sal's wife busied herself with brushing her daughter's hair. All 3 of them looked up at Aria and hiccup as they entered the kitchen.

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After a moment Sal spoke. "not bad. Just don't talk to anybody and you'll be fine. Here, my wife made you a small breakfast." The small breakfast turned out to be 2 stale and partially moldy biscuits. Picking off the bits of mold hiccup bit into the biscuit and did his best to swallow the dry stale bread. Behind Sal his wife smiled weakly at them. "sorry, I know they aren't very good." But hiccup shook his head. "they're great." It was a lie, and weak one at that, but they already had so littleâ€¦insulting their food would have just been rubbing salt in their wounds. As Aria finished her role hiccup flinched as the same whistle from last night pierced the air. Sal looked up to Aria. "have fun at work. Don't get caught." Sal turned to hiccup. "and if you follow my daughter she'll take you near the abandoned part of the city." Hiccup nodded and followed Sal's daughter to and then out the front door; with Aria following him. Outside everyone was leaving their houses, the men forming a crowd and making their way towards the mines; while the children formed another crowd and headed towards their schools. Hiccup mentally wished Aria luck as she moved into the crowd of people heading towards the mines.

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But he turned away from the direction Aria had gone and instead began to follow, Neya through the crowds and the streets. They had traveled a few blocks when Neya stopped and pointed down a strangely deserted alleyway; that passed between 2 structures. "that way. If you follow this alley you'll find yourself in the deserted section of the cityâ€¦try to be careful ok?" hiccup nodded. "thank you neya." Neya just smiled before walking away and joining the crowd of children. Beginning down the alley hiccup found that the alley was much deeper and not just a straight alley; instead it twisted and wound its way past dozens of buildings. As he went deeper into the alley hiccup found the air getting cold, while all around him the walls of the buildings became less and less maintained; until he arrived at the other end of the ally. As the walls opened up hiccup looked around at the city around him. If the city had been dilapidated before it was a dump now. Moving through the streets hiccup found his eyes drawn to the peeling paint of the buildings, the windows that were all broken. Every breath of wind would make the buildings creak and groan. Moving through the abandoned streets hiccup followed the streets and soon found himself at the edge of the city; in front of him the tree line of the Kros forest.

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Taking a deep breath hiccup had been about to move towards the forest when a noise behind him caught his attention. Turning hiccup found that he was no longer alone. An old women stood behind him, her ragged old dress clung to her bone thin body; while the ends fluttered in the light breeze. Her face was wrinkled, it's skin sagging with age, her eyes were milky white; indicating she was blind. After a moment of silence the women spoke. "soâ€|someone once again walks these empty streets?" after a moment hiccup realized it was a question directed at him. "yesâ€|.my name is hiccup." The women smiled weakly at him. "ah, politeness. That is something rarely found in a place like this. I amâ€|.well many call me Hag." Hiccup cocked his head to the side. "that's not very nice of them." Hag chuckled her body shaking with each breath of laughter. "true enough. But I wonderâ€|.what have you come to this place for? This place that is devoid of life, save for me and the rats?" hiccup shrugged. "I need to cross the Kros forest there's something on the other side that I need." This time Hag cocked her head to the side before speaking. "there is little on the other side of the forest save forâ€|the old fort. You seek something from the bones of the old dragonknight fort." Hiccup shifted from one leg to the other.

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"yes. I seek an ancient charm of some kind." Hag against cocked her head this time to the other side. "a charm? Interesting. Well we had best be off then." Hiccup raised an eyebrow. "we?" hag smiled. "yes, 'we'. You'll need my help to pass through the forest, or you'll die like all those before you." Again hiccup shifted. "why would you help me? And secondly how could you help me?" hag chuckled again. "I'm old, I've been here longer than anyone else, I know the forest, I know it's paths, trails, the plants and the leaves. No one knows it better than me, without me you'll get lost, die of starvation or dehydration." Hiccup nodded. "ok, tha still doesn't answer why you'd help me." Hag shrugged and began walking towards hiccup. "why not? I have nothing better to do right now." Hiccup blinked stupidly. "that's it?" hag nodded and walked past him; towards he forest. "that's it. Now hurry up, I haven't got all day."

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MEANWHILE

ARIA'S POV

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Aria watched as in front of the large assembled crowd a small man with a clipboard climbed up onto a small stage. "when I call your name go to the assigns worker group." Aria sighed and shifted her weight from one leg to another as she watched for her 'name' to be called. "soli: group 6, Sal; group 9, Sora; 10â€|" moving over to the group 9 crowd Aria noted that the other miners were eyeing her. After another few minutes her group was directed at a large open pit in the ground and told to start making their way down into the mine. Trekking in the dirt and mud Aria noted that the style of mining had changed since she had last seen them. When she had last seen them wooden and rope elevators had lowered the miners hundreds of feet straight down in the mine; which was built more like a pit. Presumably to keep the miners from trying to leave. This mine however was different, instead of a vertical shaft the mine was dug at a slope, meaning that to get to the bottom and start working they had to follow a steep narrow trail cut into the sloped ground.

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Following the trail Aria stopped when she felt someone forcefully grab her arm. "who da fuck are yeu? Cause you aint Sal?" turning Aria found a group of miners behind her. When she didn't speak the miner who had grabbed her arm, a skinny pale man with little hair or teeth spoke again. "bettar start takin, or we'll call da guards." Sighing again Aria spoke. "Sal's taking anâ€|.unscheduled day off. I'm taking his place." The man continued to grip her arm. "das not what we asked. We asked, who da fuck are ya?" Aria sighed. "my name is Aria, I hail from a Nordic tribe from the far north." The miner nodded and let go of her arm. "well iria les get one thing straight." Aria rolled her eyes at the mispronouncing of her name. "you gotta do Sal's share. Dat means no slackin or lollygagging. If you fall behind we wontt help yeu. Understand?" Aria just nodded and had been about to resume walking into the mine when the man holding her pulled heer close and punched her in the stomach hard enough to drive her to her knees. Above her she head him speak.

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"das for coverin Sal's shift and not mine. That lazy little fuck never does his share. I'll be sure to pound him real good when he gets back." As the group moved past her each one of them made a particular effort to either kick dirt at her, spit on her, or in one case step painfully on her hand. As the group finally passed her Aria did her best to stand up, and grab the pickax she had been given before entering the mine. One of the miners had cut the skin above one her eye as they had passed. Giving the group a reasonable head start Aria busied herself with dabbing the blood that dripped from the injury before continuing down into the mine. All around her the

world was changing, the light from the surface was vanishing, instead being replaced with torches in steel or iron brackets hung from the wall. The temperature was also changing. When she had first set foot in the mine the temperature had dropped making the mine slightly cooler than the surface. Now however they had passed beyond that level; and with some many people and torches in the mine the temperature was raising. To most people it was probably almost unbearable. Hell even with her dragonknight's resistance to fire, she was starting to find the ambient heat discomforting. But it was the noise that caught her attention the most. The sounds of hundreds of thousands of miner digging into the earth. It created a kind of chiming sound that never wavered, or diminished. Just the constant tone of metal striking earth.

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Reaching the end of the trail Aria looked around until she found a semi empty spot for her to start working on, bringing her pickax up Aria brought the pointy bit of metal down against the earth which cracked and crumbled as a result. It was steady, monotonous work, each hit was exactly like the last the only excitement being when she had to take a small step forward to stay within reach of the earth she was digging through. Every now and then she would pause to wipe the sweat from her forehead, but other than that nothing eventful happened, and she continued with her dull work.

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HICCUP'S POV

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Hiccup trudged through the first begin Hag who hummed a small tune as they walked. Hiccup could see why he would have needed her help to find his way through the forest. The trees around them were dense, so dense in fact that it almost created a kind of artificial darkness around them. At other times the local vegetation went crazy growing so thick and so wildly that it blocked the path and made traveling difficult. Every so often the bushes around them would quiver as though something were moving just beyond their field of sight, and yet none of it fazed hag; who kept moving at a steady pass, walking along the narrow dirt trail that could not have been any bigger than a wagon wheel; with little effort. Following behind her hiccup soon found that the trees were thinning and soon the tree line broke, revealing a massive clearing. Coming to a stop next to hag, hiccup looked out over the clearing and felt his eyes widen slightly. On the other side of the clearing, a massive stone wall sat, vines growing over it, large cracks in the stone showed just how old the stone

was.

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Next to him hag spoke; pointing to the stone wall as she spoke.
"There is the old fortress. Across this field you'll find the ruins;
and hopefully what you seek. I'll be waiting for you to return."
After that hag moved over slightly and sat down on a small wooden log
and smiled at hiccup; who looked back to the crumbling wall before
starting out across the clearing and towards the ancient
fortress.

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ARIA'S POV

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Aria watched as the last of the rocks she had dug out of the earth
were loaded up into a cart and pushed away by 2 men who looked as
though they hadn't slept in days. In hindsight they probably hadn't;
Aria easily recognized the symbol of prisoners on their arms. Unlike
the other works the prisoners never left the mines. They worked hours
after everyone else had gone home; only to get 3 or 4 hours of sleep,
and then they were put right back to work. Watching them push the
cart away Aria couldn't help but feel a sense of anger well up in her
stomach. She had hoped that in the time she had been a dragon;
Cinderhall would be disbanded, or at least the conditions would have
improved. But they seemed to have gotten worse. Raising the pickax
above her head Aria had been about to resume digging when the earth
around her began to shake and crumble. Dropping her pickax, Aria
covered he head as several chunks of rock fell from the ceiling. All
around her men were running trying to dodge the large boulders that
were falling from the ceiling. Starting to run Aria watched as next
to her a boulder the size of a house dropped from the ceiling and
crushed a massive wooden crane into splinters.

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Continuing to run Aria charged through the crowds of people making
their way back to the entrance of the mine and what they hoped to was
safety. Running through the collapsing mine Aria did her best to
avoid the other miners. All around her chaos raged as miners pushed
and shoved each other desperately trying to avoid being killed by the

falling debris. Next to her another boulder fell, this time the sound of bones and flesh being crushed met her ears and made her flinch. She was near the entrance now; she could see slivers of natural light. But others around her were shouting and shoving each other trying to get away from her. Looking up Aria felt her blood run cold as her eyes tracked a huge boulder easily the size of one of the loading cranes, drop from the ceiling towards her. With every step she took she could feel the boulder getting closer and closer. In front of her a miner; a male hardly older than she was; fell to the ground. Rather than getting up the man just curled into the fetal position. Bending down Aria grabbed the man and lifted him off the ground before throwing him to his feet. "keep running!"

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Then all at once she felt it; the boulder striking the ground. The ground under her feet shook, and vibrated so violently that she almost had trouble keeping upright. She'd hardly managed to go another 2 steps before the shockwave of the impact hit her; lifting her off her feet and flinging her through the air like she was made of cloth. Aria hit the ground hard, skidding for several feet before coming to a stop and laying still for several moments before slowly sitting up and surveying the area behind her where the boulder had hit the ground. Next to her the man she had saved was groaning, his skin had been cut in several places; as as he sat up several trails of blood were evident on his skin. All around them the mine continued to shake and shudder for another minute before the tremors stopped. For a full minute there was silence as everyone just looked at the mine. Aria had no doubt that they were thanking their gods that they were still breathing. But the silence was broken by a sharp voice shouting.

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"WHO DID IT?! WHO CAUSED THE COLLAPSE?! COME CLEAN NOW AND WE WONT KILL YOU; WE'LL JUST WHIP THE PISS OUT OF YOU!" Aria rolled her eyes as she stood up and helped the other miner to his feet. She could still hear the man yelling; looking for the source of the collapse. "you ok?" for a moment the miner just stared at her; then he spoke, shouting at the top of his lungs. "HERE! IT'S HER! SHE STARTED THE COLLAPSE!" Aria felt her blood boil as she did her best to vanish into the crowd of miners. This proved to be impossible however as the miners grabbed at her and did their best to hold her in place for the guards who seemed to have materialized out of thin air. Using her dragon strength Aria shoved the miners away from her; and began to weigh her options. She could continue to shove and run; possible vanish into the crowd. Not likely since the crowd had turned against her. She could head into the mine; hide out until the end of the shift; and then sneak out with the other workers. It could work but was a long shot. Or she could turn into a dragon, fly up and out of the mine, and then hide out until no one was looking for her and then

make her way back to Sal's place.

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Looking up the mineshaft; Aria made her decision. Running towards the boulder that had almost crushed her Aria clambered up the rocky surface until she was at the top of the boulder. Below her she could see the faces of the miners and the incoming guards; all looking up at her. Closing her eyes Aria focused on her dragonform and shuddered as she felt the changes begin. First her skin began to tingle and burn; as though thousands of ants were crawling on it. then her body went numb and lastly the feeling of growing in size. Closing her eyes Aria tried not to focus on the feelings racing through her body. Instead she did her best to focus on the gasps and screams of the people watching her transform. She could feel it; her chest broadening, her muscles becoming stronger, a moment later she began to cough as her lungs grew and shaped themselves into dragon lungs. As the coughing stopped Aria opened her eyes; just in time to watch her left arm twist and bend into a dragon's leg, completing the transformation.

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Kneeling down for a moment Aria pushed off the boulder, and beat her wings roughing, kicking up clouds of dust and debris inside the mine. Turning her head skyward she rocketed up out of the mine and into the open air of the sky. Instinctually she let out a roar. She had been about to start flying towards the Kros forest when an oncoming shriek made her turn her head. It wasâ€¦some kind of bird. And yetâ€¦the bird was so horribly twisted and seemingly broken. It looked as though someone had taken a bird, turned it to glass, shattered that bird and then hastily glued it back together. Turning away from the bird Aria located the Kros forest across the city and had begun to fly in that direction, when the bird let out another shriek and shot towards her. Swinging her body around, Aria let loose several fire balls all of which the bird dodged. Beating her wings a bit Aria put on some speed, she was a nightfury after all. And yet the bird not only matched her speed but soon looked like it might over take her. Growling Aria flipped over and let loose a gout of flames aimed directly at the bird's face.

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The bird backed off flying away for a bit; and Aria thought that would have been the end of it. it was not; the bird returned this time shooting towards her so fast that she didn't have time to react. The bird crashed into her and in the confusion grabbed one of her wings in it's beak and refused to let go. The effect was almost

instant, Aria plummeted out of the sky flying directly into a small
town square, bounding along off the dirt ground, crashing into and
then through a building, through the alley behind the building; which
is where the bird let go, through the building on the other side of
the alley, across the next street before finally coming to rest
against the building on the other side of the street. Gasping from
pain Aria tried to stand but found that mysteriously her strength had
left her, she could feel hundreds if not thousands of small cuts and
gashes on her body, whether from the fight with the bird or from
crashing through the buildings she didn't know.

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Her head snapped up as she watched the large bird extract itself from
the wreckage of the building where she'd left it. trying to move Aria
could feel herself getting weaker and weaker. Something was wrong,
she could feel it, that strange tingle in the back of her
throat—there was magic about. But there was nothing she could do
about it, as the bird drew closer Aria felt her dragon body shudder.
Without any energy she was changing back, and sure enough her skin,
bones, muscles, and organs had already begun to change until she was
no longer in dragon form. She barred her teeth as the strange bird
stood over her. But her eyes widened at what the bird did next, she
watched as it too let out some kind of shudder before seeming to
explode. She watched transfixed as the bird's feathers and body
exploded outwards only to freeze in mid explosion; before turning in
on itself and beginning to rearrange it's body. Aria watched as
seemingly glass feather realigned and rejoined creating a body and
the face of a woman. She watched as the woman stood over her; her
skin looking like that of cracked glass. For a moment the woman was
silent as the last of her body reformed; but when it had she spoke.
"so the dragonknights have returned." But before Aria could respond
the woman lashed out with her foot; kicking aria in the head and
sending her into the darkness of unconsciousness.

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HICCUP'S POV

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Hiccup craned his neck upwards to look at the crumbling wall in front
of him. The walk across the clearing had been odd, as though someone
had been watching him the whole time he'd been making his way here.
But he pushed past that feeling he needed to get inside the castle
before him. Walking around the wall hiccup soon found a large enough
crack in the wall for him to pass through. Taking one last look at
the outside world hiccup ducked down and walked into the crack; and

into the crumbling old fortress.

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AN: WELL FOLKS HERE IS CHAPTER 3. I'M SO SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG, I HAD PERSONAL DRAMA AND THEN MY COMPUTER FLATLINED ON ME WITH NO HOPE OF BEING REVIVED SO I HAD TO START COMPLETELY OVER.

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SO ARIA HAS BEEN CAPTURED AND THE WOMEN WHO CAPTURED HER KNOWS SHES A DRAGONKNIGHT. WHO IS THIS WOMEN AND WHAT COULD SHE WANT?

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AND NOW HICCUP IS AT THE OLD FORTRESS, WILL THE CHARMS STILL BE THERE, OR WILL THERE BE HORRORS LURKING IN THE SHDAOWS JUST WAITING FOR HIM TO WALK INTO THEIR CLUTCHES?

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THE NEXT CHAPTER WILL HAVE THOSE ANSWERS AND MORE.

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I LOOK FORWARD TO ALL YOUR COMMENTS AND REVIEWS.

4. the reliquary

_HELLO EVERYONE. A BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SENT ME NOTES AND MESSAGES GIVING ME ENCOURAGEMENT. IT'S NICE TO KNOW SOME PEOPLE LIKE MY WORK. A __**HUGE**__ THANK YOU TO__**DEATHWINGSEEKER **__WHO FINALLY KICKED MY ASS INTO WORKING ON THIS STORY AGAIN._

-.-

THANKS YOU SO MUCH DEATHWINGSEEKER!

BY THE WAY FEEL FREE TO DROP ME A NOTE SO WE CAN TALK.

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_Hiccup craned his neck upwards to look at the crumbling wall in front of him. The walk across the clearing had been odd, as though someone had been watching him the whole time he'd been making his way here. But he pushed past that feeling he needed to get inside the castle before him. Walking around the wall hiccup soon found a large enough crack in the wall for him to pass through. Taking one last

look at the outside world hiccup ducked down and walked into the crack; and into the crumbling old fortress. _

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CHAPTER 4

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Hiccup looked around as he slowly walked through the large stone corridor. He'd entered the fortress through the crack in the wall. From there he'd emerged into a large courtyard which he had crossed and made his way through a large gap in the crumbling walls. And now he was inside the castle; walking through the large stone corridors. Looking along the walls hiccup's eyes drifted over the tatters of ancient banners that had been hanging for who knows how long. Every so often hiccup would pass a suit of armor, or a vase of unknown origin. Coming to the end of the corridor hiccup found himself standing in an old doorway. The doors had long since rotted and fallen away exposing the next room. Stepping into the room hiccup found himself standing on a large walkway. High above him the stone ceiling was so high that he could not see it. moving through the room, hiccup found that the room was not a room but a balcony that over looked the real room; that was to say a large chamber. At the edge of the balcony hiccup found a small staircase that lead down into the lower chamber.

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Moving down the stairs hiccup found the chamber he was in was massive, easily the size of several houses. But it was what was in the middle of the chamber that made hiccup move forward until he was in front of the object; a large basin easily the size of a dragon. As he stepped up to the basin hiccup felt his eyes widen as the basin began to glow a faint blue light. Now standing over the basin hiccup peered down into it; only to find it full of water; with a series of sigils and runes carved into the smooth stone. He had been about to lean down and touch the water in the basin when a noise behind him made him turn. For a moment all he could make out was the ark room around him. But as he continued to look hiccup found thatâ€¦hiccup felt his eyes widen as the form of Aria seemed to materialize out of the darkness. "Aria? What are you doing here?" Aria smiled and motioned for him to follow her; before turning and making her way down another hallway. Following hiccup did his best to try and catch up with Aria who; despite his best efforts managed to stay ahead of him.

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Slowing down hiccup watched as Aria slipped into a room just off the corridor. Still following hiccup found himself in a much smaller room; a bedroom if he had to guess; judging by the large bed that sat against the far wall. Behind him hiccup heard the door close; and turned to find Aria had closed the door. Hiccup watched as Aria slowly walked forward towards him. "Aria what are you doing he-" but hiccup was cut off as Aria put a finger over his mouth. As she did so hiccup couldn't help but notice how cold her finger was. But what she did next really caught his attention. Hiccup's eyes widened as Aria's free hand reach back and pulled off the shirt she was wearing; reveling her smooth skin and chest. "Aria what are y-" but again Aria silence him, this time her hand moving down to under her pants; and let them hit the floor, leaving her in only her underwear. This time when hiccup tried to speak Aria reached up with both hands and wrapped her arms around his neck before pulling him into a kiss. Trying to break the kiss hiccup found his muscles beginning to relax, and his mind beginning to cloud. He groaned frustrated as aria pressed her body closer to his; grinding their bodies together. As the kiss broke hiccup felt his body respond; making him blush slightly as Aria ran a hand tantalizingly over his crotch.

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This time her kissed her; something in him mind going fuzzy, he pushed her back so they were leaning against the bed; his tongue rolling out of his mouth and into hers claiming it. his own arms wrapped around her waist forcing their bodies to grind together again. This time when the broke the kiss hiccup watched as Aria gave a small jump up and onto the bed. He watched as she grinned slightly as she leaned back offering hiccup a very generous view of her thighs and crotch. His mind was even foggier now, slowly he got to his knees and leaned forward. Aria's skin was cold, but salty. Almost hungrily he licked at her skin, enjoying the smoothness of it mixed with the saltiness. It was like a drug, the more he licked and kissed the more he wanted. Becoming more aggressive hiccup gently bit Aria's upper thigh enjoying the small yelp that she let out. Becoming even bolder hiccup let his lips leave her skin; which made Aria whimper in response, but the whimper turned into a moan as hiccup's lips touched the fabric of her underwear, gently biting it before running the flat of his tongue against her crotch.

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He felt her grab his head and he could not help but growl as she tugged at his hair. He become even bolder, reaching up hiccup slipped his fingers past Aria's underwear grinning as she lt out a loud

whimper. He could feel her sex; dripping wet and quivering. Taking to kissing her thigh hiccup felt his fingers slip inside Aria who gasped and tugged more roughly at his hair. Standing up hiccup moved so he could watch Aria's face change as he played with her. Only to find that Aria's face was no longer what he was looking at. Hiccup tore his hand away from Aria's body and backed away as in front of him Aria changed; her skin crawling like thousands of bugs were under it. he watched as she became something like a corpse; skin dried, wrinkled and diseased looking. His back hit the wall and he watched as 'Aria' stood up and looked at him. "love me." Her words sounded raspy and strained, as though she had not had a glass of water for several years.

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"love me!" this time she shouted it. hiccup watched as 'Aria' ran at him. He did the only thing he could think of. As the fake 'Aria' neared him hiccup lashed out, punching Aria in the chest and making her burst into a cloud of dust. Hiccup watched half amazed, half horrified as the cloud of dust swirled before reforming 'Aria' who let out another cry and charged at him. "IF I CAN HAVE YOUR LOVE NO ONE CAN!" ducking her attack hiccup grabbed one of her legs and hurled her across the room; taking the moment to run from the room and back down the corridor he had followed her through, moments before. Reentering the great hall hiccup looked around for a place to hide, or stage a fight. His eyes fell upon the basin of water in the middle of the room. Running towards it hiccup heard 'Aria' let out a screech; before he felt her grab his shoulders and lift him off the ground; before hitting the surface of the water in the basin. Hiccup's world became wet and filled with bubbles as he tumbled about in the water. His hands lashed out searching for something to grab on to. he could feel, 'Aria' still holding onto him. He felt one of his hands break the surface of the water and he spashed about looking for the edge of the basin so he might pull himself out.

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But a second later hiccup felt someone grab him arm and pull him up and out of the basin with ease. Coughing and spitting up water, hiccup blinked furiously to rid his eyes of the water that clung to them, while his eyes fell uponâ€¦.but he had no time to think as the fake Aria seemed to explode upwards into the air from the basin, water dropping from her body and landing on the cold stone floor sending echoes racing around the chamber. "CLEANSING FLAMES!" a second later the fake Aria began to writhe and scream as blinding flames ignited her body and began to burn her away until not even ash remained. Still coughing hiccup recovered enough to look up at his savior; an eerily blue figure of a man clad in armor. "thank you." The man turned to him. "how is this possible?" hiccup shrugged. "how is what possible?" the man looked back at the basin; it's waters still full of waves. "how can I be here?...unlessâ€¦.." the man turned to hiccup again. "you're a dragon knight." Hiccup nodded. "yes." The man

smiled. "so amâ€¦.was I." hiccup cocked his head to the side. "what do you mean 'was'?" the man chuckled. "I would have thought that was obvious."

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When hiccup didn't respond the man sighed. "I'm dead." Hiccup was silent for a moment. "butâ€¦..you're right here." The man nodded. "yes but it's not really me, it myâ€¦..noâ€¦..not a ghost, I can feel no presence or fragment of my soulâ€¦..so I mustâ€¦..i must be a rumunti." Hiccup cocked his head again. "a what?" the man smiled. "a rumunti; a kind of magical shadow, left over from a spell I must have cast when I was living." Hiccup cocked his head. "you don't know for sure?" the man shook his head. "no, I do notâ€¦but I must ask. Why are you here?" hiccup shrugged. "looking for an old charm; to present to the local lord." The ghost nodded. "a worthy goal, if you'll follow me I may be able to assist you." As they walked around the basin hiccup spoke. "what was that thing?" the ghost sighed. "a sad creature called a wraith. A spirit that possesses a dead body so that for a time it might feel the sensation of being alive again." Hiccup turned and glanced at a pile of ash and dust that he half expect to try and kill him. "it certainly seemed real enough."

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The specter nodded. "indeed. But I must askâ€¦.how much time has passed? Has malacath's rampage been stopped?" hiccup shook his head sadly and told the specter all he knew. When he was done the specter was silent for a moment; then. "we'llâ€¦..it is some comfort to know that this facility was not the only one to suffer malacath's wraith." Looking around the room they had emerged into hiccup's eyes widened as they fell upon a dozen skeletons littering the floor. "what happened here?" the specter sighed. "malacath." Hiccup looked to him. "tell me. I want to know." As they continued through the ruins the specter continued to speak. "this facility was a reliquary. It was used to store ancient artifacts of vast, or unstable power. I rememberâ€¦.that day malacath attacked us. It was swift; without warning. I was in the alchemy lab; when I felt the fortress shudder. I ran out onto the grounds and foundâ€¦..battle." hiccup watched as the specter stopped for a moment. "dragons were everywhere; on the ground in the air; there was shouting screaming; people confused about what was happening. We fought for as long as we could but when the grounds were lost we retreated into the great hall. If nothing else we could hold that place; and hopefully wait for word of the attack to spread and hopefully bring aid with it."

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The specter began walking again. "but now I know that was a mistake. Malacath wasn't letting us build a strong hold; he was corralling us. By putting us all in one place he could ensure that everyone saw him. We watched as the dragons pulled back and heâ€¦he started killing. He killed so many; seemingly without any effort. He stabbed them; broke their necks, set them on fire, used every possible way to kill someone and he did it without so much as breaking a sweat. Some of us tried to run, to escape the facility. That's when we discovered 'it'." hiccup cocked his head. "'it' what?" the specter sighed. 'did you not notice the large barren patch of land surrounding the facility? It's in a perfect circle. Malacath before the attack erected a barrier. Any living thing that touched it burst into magical flames that could not be extinguished. He never had any intention of letting anyone leave the facility alive. He was going to kill us all. We became desperate; so many of us had been killed; and malacath was blasting and twisting the facility apart to find those that remained. In that dark momentâ€¦.we broke our covenant. We turned to the artifacts held here for so long. We turned their considerable powers against malacathâ€¦and in the end I think that is what sealed our fate. The hand of glory; the dead man's noose, even Mala was released from their prisons and even then; they could not save us."

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again hiccup cocked his head. "whoâ€¦or what is MALa?" the specter seemed to shudder. "a very powerful demon who made a move to try and become a curse lord; several thousand years ago. Luckily a group of mages was able to imprison her; in a vessel of her own blood. But then we released her to try and kill malacath; and she did what she does best; trickin us into killing most of each other and abandoned those who remained. Although I have no doubts she is still nearby." "why do you think that?" the specter grinned. "because we built a phylactery of her blood. If she strays to far from it she'll begin to weaken and eventually waste away into nothingness." Hiccup nodded. "what does she look like? She may be hiding out in Cinderhall." The specter nodded. "yes I have wondered if she was there. She can take any form she wants but she enjoys the form of a frail old women; who tricks people into doing things for her." Hiccup stopped cold; "I think I met her." The specter turned to face him. "what?" hiccup repeated himself. "I think I met her. She led me here to the fortress; butâ€¦..she stayed outside the barren zone." The specter nodded. "yes. Even now with the fortress mostly crumbled the magical defenses are still in place. She would not be able to reenter the castle once she left it. she probably wishes for you to find her phylactery. Then she'll try to bargaining with you and trick you into giving it to her."

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Hiccup nodded. "im gunna guess that would be bad?" the specter nodded. "yes. Although she is not a curse lord her power is easily on

par with theirs. And with her phylactery she could easily unleash her full power on the world which would be disastrous." Hiccup nodded in understanding. "how can we stop her?" the specter shook his head. "we can't. as a demon even if we destroy her body she'll just reconstruct it after a few hundred years. The only way to stop her is to contain her in the original vessel; which by luck we still have here. If you can find it you can contain her in it, and then bury the vessel as deep as you can; or find a place that no one will ever go and put it there. The world is dangerous enough; MALa just makes it so much worse." Hiccup nodded. "what does her vessel look like?" "it's a stone vase; with a iron lid built over the top. Once she's inside you'll have to close the top over her and keep it closed while the seals power up and activate. Do you understand?" again hiccup nodded. "yes." The specter nodded. "good. Because we've arrived." Looking in front of them hiccup found himself staring at a set of large stone doors. Each door was massive easily 3 times his own size and held in place by large steel hinges.

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"behind these doors we stored our most valuable and dangerous artifacts. Not only is the charm you seek inside; but also MALa's vessel. Go in find them and bring them both out. Then we can move on." Hiccup looked at the specter. "you're not coming with me?" the specter shook his head sadly. "no. I never walked that room in life; there for in death entry is forever barred to me. However I do know that the charm an MALa's vessel will be at the back of the chamber." Hiccup nodded. "okâ€|any idea of how I get the doors open?" again the specter shook his head. "sorry no." hiccup sighed and began examining the doors. They truly were large; with dozens of glyphs and runes carved onto their surface. Kneeling down by one of the hinges hiccup smiled as he found his way in; a small plant growing between the hinge and the stone door. Stepping back hiccup closed his eyes and spread his arms apart. Now that he was focusing he could feel them; the plants and roots that had grown through the stone walls and ceiling and into the room beyond. Slowly he coaxed them; tempted them to grow, and soon enough they did. Hiccup smiled as he felts the roots bend and twist to his will; first he made them stronger; then he twisted and braided them into ropes and lastly he forced them into the stone doors. He smiled a bit bigger as he heard the sound of stone grinding and crumbling. But he couldn't stop yet. Slowly he began to unwind the rope he had made; forcing the roots to split apart and expand.

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Opening his eyes hiccup watched as the stone doors shook for a moment before large cracks began to appear and spread across the surface; until finally the stone broke and crumbled to the ground in a heap of rubble and dust. Next to him the specter chuckled. "that works I guess. Hiccup nodded and stepped forward and into the chamber before him. It took his eyes several minutes to adjust to the lack of light;

but when they did he felt them widen in surprise. He wasn't sure what he had expected to find; but what he found were a series of small tables and pedestals with objects sitting on them. As he walked past some of them they creaked and groaned; as though trying to call out to him; while others gleamed and glinted as though they were some kind of eye that wanted to watch him pass by. But he ignored them and instead made his way to the back of chamber before examining some of the items on the tables until he found what he was looking for. The charm was simple enough. It was a kind of metal to be pinned to the front of a uniform. As he picked it up he examined it; it was bronze—or maybe copper. A symbol of a dragon's head with a blade in front of it gleamed up at him; A crown sat atop the dragon's head.

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Slipping the charm into his pocket hiccup set about to find the vessel; only to find it laying abandoned on the floor with its lid open. Picking it up hiccup smiled; the iron lid had a kind of metal fastening to it; to help keep it closed; smart. As he lifted the vessel up he found that it made a small rattling sound came from within. Reaching into the vessel hiccup felt his eyes widen in shock as several symbols began to glow on the surface of the vase for a moment before vanishing. Finding the object inside the vase hiccup pulled it out and began to walk back to the entrance to the room while examining the object. It was a small necklace; made of some kind of black leather twine with a small vile of something in the middle of it. Looking up hiccup found that the spectral knight was within ear shot of him. "hey do you know what this is?" as he spoke he held up the necklace. As he did so a wind kicked through the hall and hiccup staggered slightly. "aahhhh. Such a smart clever boy." Blinking dust out of his eyes hiccup found that the specter had drawn his blade and had it pointed at HAG; who had appeared in the hall.

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Hiccup watched as hag turned and faced him. "now, please—give me my amulet." Hiccup shook his head and dropped the amulet back into the vase. "not a chance demon." Hag's face bend into a snarl. "I'm not the demon here boy. My soul is still intact it's just twisted. You're on the other hand is fractured and warped; it's—unnatural. but I suppose you are right; you did go through all this work, and now to give up your prize with no kind of repayment—I suppose that is a bit unfair. So how about this—how about we make a little deal? You give me my amulet and give you—say—" a second later a figure stepped out from behind Hag. Hiccup felt his heart clench and his eyes widen;

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The figure behind hag was a women; tall and a bit round. She wore a set of standard Viking armor. Hiccup felt tears form in his eyes and he found himself staring at him mother. "how about I bring your mother back to life? Think about it boy; I've got all the time in the world or you to decide."

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AN: WELL FOLKS. THERE IS CHAPTER 4. THIS BY NO MEANS I'M BACK 24/7. I'VE BEEN VERY BUSY BUILDING A VIDEO GAME; I ALMOST HAVE NO TIME TO WRITE ANYMORE.

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BUT I PROMISE I'LL TRY TO START WRITING AGAIN.

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I'M HOPING TO GET SOME REVIEWS AND COMMENTS FROM THIS.

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SO HAG IS A DEMON; AND NOW HICCUP HOLDS THE KEY TO SEALING HAG AWAY FOREVER; OR GETTING HIS MOTHER BACK FROM THE DEAD.

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WHAT WILL HE DO?

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HOPE YOU ALL EENJOYED THE LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY IN THIS CHAPTER. SEEMS LIKE MALACATH IS PRETTY RUTHLESS.

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HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AGAIN NEXT TIME.

5. you interest me

_The figure behind Hag was a ; tall and a bit round. She wore a set of standard Viking armor. Hiccup felt tears form in his eyes and he found himself staring at him mother. "how about I bring your mother back to life? Think about it boy; I've got all the time in the world or you to decide." _

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CHAPTER 5

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Hiccup found himself stunned. Across from him he stared at the form of his mother exactly how he remembered her to be. Tall, a bit on the round side, tan skinâ€¦beautiful long blonde hair. Hiccup angrily wiped tears away from his eyes. Suddenly despite everything he'd gone through he felt weak. In front of him Mala spoke. "better pick soon boy. This dealâ€¦..expires. and you don't want to be on the wrong side of it." hiccup bit his lip. Next to him the spirit of the former dragon knight spoke. "you must not listen to her. It may look like your mother, but it's not. It's just some spirit plucked from the afterlife and twisted to look like your mother. She's not real." Mala's face twisted in anger. "TIMES UP! CHOOSE BOY!" Hiccup flinched at the shrillness in the demon's voice. Swallowing the cold lump in his throat he spoke. "no. I won't help you escape this place demon." Mala glared at him for a moment before speaking in a voice that was dripping with venom. "that was the wrong choice boy." Hiccup barely had time to bring his sword up to deflect the attack his mother launched at him. Shifting his weight to launch his own attack hiccup felt his mother lash out and delivery a punch to his stomach that not only connected but lifted him off the ground, hurled him across the room, slammed him into the wall with enough force to crack the ancient stone, and knock the wind out of him.

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Staggering to his feet hiccup dove into a roll and came up just as his mother brought her battleaxe down right where he had been moments before. Mquickle the battle became one sided. Hiccup would be forced to duck, roll, dodge, and weave his way out of his mother's attacks. Feeling his back hit the wall hiccup bit his lip. Across the room he could see Hag and the frmer dragon knight spirit having their own battle. But his attention was drawn back to his own battle as his mother swung her axe horizontally and forced him to duck or lose his head. Rolling away from his mom hiccup rolled to his feet and took off; running towards Hag and the dragon knight spirit. Rushing past Hag hiccup turned and watched as the old woman's face twisted in confusion before realization lanced across her face. A moment later Hag vanished in a puff of smoke as hiccup's mother barreled through the space she had been seconds before. Dodging the attack hiccup heard the spirit talk. "this is getting us nowhere. They're just too powerful for u to take head on; even when we separate them." Climbing to his feet hiccup spoke. "well what do you suggest?!"

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Hiccup watched as the smoke Hag had become began to swirl and compress reforming her body. "there maybe be somethingâ€|can you get back into the artifact room?" hiccup nodded. "yeah but that leaves you alone with both of them. The spirited nodded. "I know. but this is desperate. You're looking for a small bottle, it'll have a glowing bead of light inside it. Bring it to me. GO!" hiccup did just that, rushing past the still reforming Hag and ducking a swinging attack by his mother. Rushing back into the near pitch black artifact room hiccup did a fast sweep andâ€|..there it was. Rushing past dusty scrolls, ancient statues, and weapons he'd never seen before hiccup grabbed the bottle and rushed back to the battle in time to see the spirit send his mother flying with a blast of magical light. "I've got it." for a moment the spirit vanished only to reappear right next to him. Hiccup felt the spirit grab the bottle and pull it from his hand. "NOW RUN! AND DON'T STOP!" the next moment happened in a blur. Hiccup felt the spirit give him a shove in the direction towards the way they had come; while at the same time pulling the hand that held the bottle back before throwing the bottle at the ground just in front of Hag.

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Taking off down the hallway hiccup heard the tickle of the glass as the small glass bottle holding the ball of light shattered from the impact. Less than a heartbeat later the entire castle began to shake and tremble. But that was not all; rushing throw the hallways and corridors, hiccup noticed that all around him wind was rushing past him. Chancing a glance backwards hiccup felt his eyes widen in horror as adrenaline hit his system making him run even faster than he had been before. Light; that was the only way to describe what he saw. Even as he ran hiccup watched as a massive wall of light and heat raced after him trying to catch up to him. Running even faster hiccup found the same crack in the wall he'd used to enter the castle and blasted through it and away from the castle as the light continued to follow him. Running across the barren land hiccup chanced another glance backwards as he neared the tree line. A massive dome of light, wind, and heat had covered the ancient castle. At the top of the dome hiccup could see clouds swirling and storming as the dome became even bigger and enveloped them. Racing through the trees hiccup felt his body push itself to its absolute limit. Even with his dragon enhanced strength and speed his body was wearing out; his muscles screamed in exhaustion and each heartbeat would send a jolt of pain through his chest. But he had no time to stop and rest.

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The dome of light was getting bigger and bigger and seemed to be gaining on him. Leaping off a small hill hiccup felt the air rushing past him grab him and fling him forward through the air before slamming him back down to the ground and forced him to keep running. But he had gone barely 200 feet before hiccup felt his foot, catch on

a gnarled old tree root half sticking up out of the ground. Hiccup fell, hard; hitting the ground with enough force to knock the wind out of him. Turning his head he watched in fear as the wall of light and heat neared him and he lay there helpless to move or escape. As the dome of light neared him he felt the wind around him become even stronger; it became so strong that it actually managed to push him back several feet until he felt his back hit a tree. And still the dome was growing, the roaring sound it was making was defining. Nothing hiccup had ever heard before had been this loud. For a fraction of a moment hiccup worried the dome would consume him. But even as he lay there slumped over helpless to run away, the dome seemed to shudder before vanishing in the blink of an eye. The effect was instant, the wind that had been pushing against him suddenly began to pull at him.

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Grabbing onto the tree he had been pushed against hiccup held on as the wind rushed past him, reclaiming the area that the dome had been in moments before. As the wind died down hiccup managed to pull himself to his feet. Blinking sand, dirt and dust from his eyes hiccup glanced back in the direction of the old fortress; his eyes went wide with shock. The entire fortress was gone, not just gone but completely wiped away from the surface of the earth. Instead in its place a massive crater had appeared. As his eyes traveled the crater they got even wider. Yes he could see the treeline of the forest around the sides of the crater but he could not make out the far side. Looking down into the crater hiccup again felt his eyes widen again in shock. The crater was HUGE, easily 3 miles to the bottom, and maybe another .7 miles across? But it was not like the craters he'd seen made at Birk. This one was perfectly smooth. Reaching down hiccup put his hand past the ledge and ran it along the side of the crater. It was like running his hand across polished metal. Nervously hiccup hurried away from the edge of the crater and into the forest towards Cinderhall.

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As he walked he found himself pulling the dragon knight charm out of his pocket and looking at it more closely. The charm itself was made up like a medal to be hung from a warrior's chest. It seemed to me made out of mostly metal but the dragon's eyes were a green color, and made him think of emeralds. Shaking his head slightly hiccup put the charm away and hurried along his way. Oddly enough the forest seemed to have changed. It no longer barred down on him and threatened to swallow him. Instead it felt as though it was guiding him along the path until he found himself back in the outskirts of Cinderhall. Even the empty streets seemed to be more welcoming as he walked down them each steep echoing off the walls and abandoned buildings. As he neared the main street however reality snapped back in. He was not in a happy place. He was in Cinderhall and a glorified slave camp. Nearing the main streets hiccup knelt down in the shadows and waited for a particularly large crowd of pack animals and their tenders to pass by before slipping out of the shadows and into the

group; falling in line and following the crowd for several blocked before ducking into an alley and making his way back towards the hovel that Sal and his family called home.

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Nearing the home hiccup could not help but feel a little uneasy. Something was off. The hair on the back of his neck was sticking up and even as he climbed the small stairs up to the door he felt his heart beginning to race. Gripping the door hiccup's eyes widened as he found the door was unlocked. Slowly he pushed the door open, finding the house pitch black. Making his way through the darkened home hiccup called out as he entered the kitchen. "Sal? Aria? Miropy? Neya?" his voice echoed off the walls but it was the new voice that made hiccup flinch. "sorry they'reâ€¦not able to respond right now." A moment later a ball of light blazed into life in front of him. shielding his eyes from the sudden light hiccup staggered back slightly. "oh sorry is that too bright? Allow me." A moment later the light dimmed and hiccup found he was able to look around the room without shielding his eyes. A second later he wished he hadn't; was his eyes widened in horror.

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Blood covered every surface of the room. The walls, floor, and ceiling were covered in red. In front of him still sitting at the table was Sal. He was slumped over the table 3 long metal swords sticking out of his back blood still dripped from his now limp arms beneath him a large pool of blood had formed. In the sickeningly red pool hiccup could see the glints of the gold coins Aria had paid him with. Next his eyes landed on an area in the kitchen. Dozens of knives were buried in the wooden cabinets and walls. As his eyes found the floor he found the form of moripy, laying. Another pool of blood told him she was dead to. taking a deep breath hiccup inhaled the smell of blood. Turning his attention to the person who had spoken hiccup found himself staring at a woman. "where is Neya?" the woman cocked her head to the side. "is that the daughter? Oh don't worry about her. She's been taken to a special school for people whose parents broke the law. Right now she's beingâ€¦questioned by the teachers there." Hiccup felt himself bristle with anger. "you mean she's being tortured?!" the woman shrugged. "you say torture, I say questioned, others might say raped. To tell you the truth, I don't give a shit. Don't worry you'll see her again soon enough. She will share your fate. But youâ€¦you are something that interests me."

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Hiccup watched as the woman took a step forward and pulled the chair out from under Sal's dead body, making the body Sal against the swords impaled in its chest. A moment later the woman sat down in the chair and continued speaking. "I was in the mine today and I saw something unexpected. After a cave in a girl turned into a dragon and tried to fly away. Of course she didn't get very far, see I couldn't let her leave, so I did what any self respecting shattered sister would do. I turned into a giant bird and caught her." Gain hiccup felt himself bristle as the woman continued. "but you see I know a thing or two about dragon knights. They always travel in pairs, so where there was one there must be another. So I used some magic and tore the memories out of her mind, I saw thisâ€¦..hovel, and this worthless family." As she spoke she kicked Sal's dead body. "so I thought I'd pay them a visit, and remind them the punishment of breaking the laws, here in Cinderhall." He'd had enough. Letting out a roar of rage hiccup charged forward his sword magically appearing in his hand. Instantly the woman moved, grabbing his attacking hand and shoving it to the side while grabbing the front of hiccup's shirt.

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A split second later hiccup felt himself not only being pushed away from the woman but being lifted into the air, and hurled away. He gasped in pain as he felt his back crash against the weak walls of the home. Staggering to his feet hiccup saw the woman appear in front of him and lash out with a kick that was backed by superhuman strength. Hiccup went flying not only through that wall but another was before flying another 30 feet before hitting the mud and shit covered streets and sliding on them for a few feet before coming to a rest. Staggering to his feet Hiccup tried to focus and find the woman who was attacking him. he found her a moment to late as he felt her fingers wrap around him throat while she lifted him off the ground. But he was not helpless; he was a dragon knight. Planting his feet against her stomach hiccup pushed away and forced her to release her grip on him. landing in the mud hiccup watched as the woman straightened up. "you're fighting a losing battle boy." Hiccup watched as the woman knelt down and picked up a rock from the ground before slamming the rock against her face. Her skin did not bleed or scar instead it cracked like glass. "whatâ€¦what are yo-" but hiccup never finished her sentence as he felt several small pricks on his back.

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The effect was almost instant; hiccup felt his body go numb. Fighting to stay on his feet was futile as he felt his knees hit the mud. He watched as the woman slowly walked up to him. "relax boy. I'm not going to kill you. That's a job for the slizards." The next thing hiccup felt was the woman's knee slam into his face knocking him unconscious.

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AN: WELL FOLKS SORRY IT TOOK AGES TO WRITE BUT HERE IS CHAPTER 5.

I HOPE YOU ALL LIKED IT.

REVIEWS ARE WANTED/NEEDED.

6. astrid, slizards, and nude women

The effect was almost instant; hiccup felt his body go numb. Fighting to stay on his feet was futile as he felt his knees hit the mud. He watched as the woman slowly walked up to him. "relax boy. I'm not going to kill you. That's a job for the slizards." The next thing hiccup felt was the woman's knee slam into his face knocking him unconscious.

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CHAPTER 6

BIRK

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Astrid sighed and closed the book in front of her before setting it down on the dirt. It was a lot to process. Not only had hiccup apparently been delving deeply into magic but it appeared he had somehow managed to work a spell on himself. A spell that had turned him into some kind of superhuman warrior, that was stronger, faster and smarter than a normal warrior. Sighing again Astrid remained still for a moment before striking the earth with her fist. How long had she studied dragons for? How many nights had she rejected perfectly good suitors so she could train and become the best warrior in the village? And yet hiccup the skinniest, weakest, and more irritating boy in the village had found a way around all of her training. Somehow he had managed to figure out a way to bypass all the training and work to get even better results than she had. Striking the ground again Astrid bit her lip till it bled. It wasn't fair, hiccup hadn't worked hard to get the power he now had; and what was worse he hadn't written down the spell so others could copy it. yes he had kept detailed updates on the spell's effects on his body but there was no indication of how the spell was invoked or triggered. Somehow the little brat had managed to cheat and keep it hidden from everyone.

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"not fair is it?" Astrid whipped around while at the same time jumping to her feet and drawing her sword. She barely had a second to recognize the man that stood before her, tall, wearing a travel's cloak, his entire eyes a jet black color. Even before she could speak the man thrust his hand out in front of him and made a complicated wiggling sign with his fingers. Instantly the air was filled with the sounds of bending and warping metal as her sword bends and twists like a viperous snake wrapping around her arms like a length of rope. "I have no interest in fighting you Astrid." Her eyes widen. "how do you know my name?" the man smiles. "I know a great deal about you. Don't worry I've not been stalking you. Your mind may be closed off to the rest of the world but not to me; see I can read your thoughts not just the ones you're thinking now but the ones you thought of weeks ago. For instanceâ€¦" the man falls silent for a moment. "you were jealous when you saw hiccup getting attention from other girls." Astrid angrily shook her head "that's a lie!" the man chuckled. "and yet you know it to be true. But I'm not here to play 'guess what I'm thinking'. I'm here to make you an offer. See I work for a groupâ€¦a group who is very interested in hiccup and what he managed to do. See the magic he used; it's old, very old, so old in fact that most can't even remember how it works."

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Astrid glared at the man. "get to the point." The man bowed his head slightly. "very well. Right now my employer is in the position to give you just about anything you desire, money, fame, powerâ€¦boys. name you're price and it's yours. All he asks in return is for that book at your feet." Astrid looked down at the journal hiccup had used to detail the effects of his spell. "why not just take it now?" the man smiled. "the knowledge in that book is special; magical, if it's stolen then no one would be able to understand it. they could look at it and read the words but the meaning of those words would elude them until their dying breath. For my employer to understand the book it must be willingly given to him. I'm not asking for an answer now. But soon. Just remember, he can give you anything you're heart desires, and all it will cost you is a book. Seems like a pretty good deal." And before Astrid could respond the man simply dissolved into a puff of smoke and vapor; while at the same time the sword binding her wrists uncurled and returned to it's original state.

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HICCUP'S POV

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Slowly hiccup opened his eyes. Everything around him was blurred. And his chest felt like someone had been dropping rocks onto it. But his ears were still working which was why he heard a female's voice say. "he's still not away. Hit him again." A moment later hiccup felt something slam into his chest and stomach knocking the wind out of him and dropping him to his knees as he coughed in pain. Blinking furiously hiccup coughed as he felt someone grab him by the shoulders and push/drag him to his feet. As his vision cleared he barred his teeth as he found the women from before standing in front of him. "good you're awake." A moment later hiccup staggered again as the women slapped him across the face. Yet it was no ordinary slap. As he fingers touched his face he felt the skin split and break like a dozen knives were being slowly drawn across it. pain lanced through hiccup's body; so much that he screamed. And yetâ€¦almost at once the pain was gone, and instead his skin suddenly felt as though bugs were crawling on it. he watched as the women's expression narrowed. "you damned dragon knights and your healing powers. Pity really, makes torturing you more of a chore than fun." Hiccup watched as the women turned her back to him.

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Taking the moment to look around hiccup found that his hands were bound behind his back by a set of interlocking iron bracers. Just behind him 2 large men stood on either side of him, to ensure he didn't try to run away. A ways behind them hiccup could see a conscious Aria who had a look of hatred across her face andâ€¦hiccup felt his eyes widen. Neya too was bound and flanked by two men. Unlike him and Aria though she showed signs of major abuse. Her clothes were torn in numerous places, her face was covered in horrible blue and black bruises and hiccup could see his lips were split and bleeding in several places. And yetâ€¦her eyes were what haunted him the most; they were empty. No emotion of thought, justâ€¦empty. but the women was speaking now and hiccup turned his attention towards her. "I'm sure by now your girlfriend had figured out what I am. But you're still new to all this so allow me to explain." But Aria interrupted her; every word dripping with hatred. "no need, whore. You're a shattered sister. Some slut who wanted to live forever, so you murdered a bunch of girls, did some rituals and then carved out your own organs and offered them to so demi-god who was just pathetic enough to ta-"

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But the rest of hat Aria was shouting was cut off as the women slapped her hard enough to lift her off her feet. Hiccup watched as Aria looked up at the women. Hiccup could see dozen of cuts and gashes covering Aria's face. And yet even as he looked at her the cuts were healing and soon her face looked as it had before. The women however grabbed Aria by the thorat and lifted her off the ground with one arm. "YOU WILL NOT SPEAK OF LADY POTINERA LIKE THAT

GIRL! YOU WILL NOT SPEAK OF HER EVER!" another slap followed the women's shouting. Hiccup watched as the women dropped Aria who was already healing and turned back to him. "you dragon knights think you're so superior. But you draw your powers from dragons, just as I draw my powers from lady Potinera. But no matter; Soon the world will be rid of the 1st two dragon knights. See that stone behind me?" looking behind the women hiccup found himself looking at a large stone that had been cut into a disk that was easily 5 times as large as he was. "it covered the entrance to the Kek tunnels. That's where we throw our sewage, dead bodies, troublemakers, things like that. That's where you're going." Hiccup watched as the women walked over to the stone and gripped two small iron bars built into the stone.

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Again hiccup's eyes widened as the women moved the massive stone with almost no effort. "put them in." at once hiccup felt the two men behind him pick him up and toss him into the tunnel. As the ground rushed up to meet his face hiccup closed his eyes; thankful that he had done so as his face landed in something warm accompanied with a smell that made his gag and almost throw up. Soon Aria and Neya landed on the ground next to him. Aria coughed at the smell while neya threw up and began to sob silently. Behind them the women was laughing. "say hello to the slizards for me." A moment later the large disk stone was put back into place drenching them in darkness so thick that even after several minutes hiccup's eyes still had not adjusted. "what now?" his question was answered by Aria who had managed to get to her feet. Hiccup flinched as light blasted into existence as Aria conjured up her overworld armor which was accompanied moments later by the sound of her shackles hitting the ground. Conjuring up his out armor hiccup felt the bindings on his wrists fall away. Kneeling down hiccup helped neya to her feet. Unlike his and Aria's Neya's binding were simple rope that he easily pull apart to free her hands. "what now?"

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Helping neya to her feet hiccup turned and watched as Aria conjured up a small ball of light. "we follow the tunnels. If we can find a weak point in the wall then we can use our strength to force our way out. But we have to hurry befo-" "BBBBBLLLLLLLLAAAAAAA!" hiccup nearly jumped out of his skin as the deranged roar echoed through the tunnels, and passages around them. Aria swore. "damn. Come on we have to hurry, and try to stay as silent as you can." Making their way through the tunnels was no easily feat. Every step they took made a horrific 'slurp' sound as their feet sunk up to their ankles in things hiccup never even wanted to think about. The stench was horrible. No matter how they drew breath the smell seemed to work it's way into their bodies, making them gag and wretch and throw up on several occasions. As they turned a corner hiccup spotted movement out of the corner of his eye. Turning towards it readying himself for

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They were full out running now. Charging through multiple passageways and tunnels every few minutes another roar would echo around them and make them run just a little bit faster. They had just emerged into a large cavernous room when hiccup heard Aria shout. "WEAPONS UP!" a moment later hiccup watched as in front of them a shadow left the wall and lunged at them. And that was when he got his first sight of a slizard. It was enough to make him almost throw up again. The figure of the slizard was like something out of his nightmares. Waxy, pale skin that looked like it had never seen sunlight was stretched tightly around what looked like the tail end of a worm, with 6 spindly legs. From the waist up however the slizard was 'human'. It's frail arms were so thin hiccup was amazed it's bones did not break as it clawed at the air as it lunged at Aria. His face was a shadow of what I face should be. No eyes or nose, just a horrible toothless mouth that gnashed at the air; and on either side of its head a set of slits from which a series of small tendrils moved lazily through the air; looking more like hair underwear than anything else. Hiccup watched horrified as Aria caught the slizard as it lunged at her. Spinning the slider around hiccup watched her draw back her fist and crush the slizard's head against the rock wall behind her. Blood and gore sprayed everywhere, but Aria ignored this. "Come on we have to keep going. That was just a scout. The main group will be here soon.

And trust me they'll easily overtake us."

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Continuing to run through the maze of tunnels hiccup made sure to keep Neya in front of him as they ran. If they were attacked she would need to be defended due to her condition and the fact that unlike him and Aria he had no weapon. In front of them hiccup watched Aria angled her shoulder and slammed it against a stone wall only to have the wall give way andâ€¦. "where are we?" hiccup found himself in a corridor unlike the others they had been running through. Gone was the roughly cut and carved out walls, instead replaced by smooth polished stone walls. In front of him Aria motioned for them to continue running, as they did so she spoke. "Not sure. The dragon knights were studying these tunnels back when I was-" but Aira's words were cut off by a horrible scream. "BBBBLLLLLLLLRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGG!" whipping around hiccup staggered backwards as the force of a charging slizard crashed into him. Hiccup reached out and managed to grab the shoulder's of the charging creature before it was fully on top of him. The feeling of the creature's skin was horrible; ice cold and covered in sweat. Even as his fingered gripped the horrible flesh he could feel the muscles moving like thousands of small worms.

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. Pushing the creature backwards hiccup conjured up his sword and drove the blade into the chest of the creature. He expected the creature to simple go limp; it did not. Instead the creature let out another bellowing howl that sent shivers through his entire body. Hiccup watched horrified as the slizard began to spasm and twitch violently. The effect was that the slizard's skin tore and ripped exposing the horribly pale muscles under the skin. Hiccup staggered backwards horrified as he watched the slizard began to claw and grasp at the gapping and ragged hole in its chest trying to close it. Hiccup felt his stomach lurch as he watched the slizard took a staggering step before collapsing to the ground and twitching for a moment longer before becoming still. It took only a second for hiccup to react. He took another staggering step backwards and felt his back hit the wall. His stomach lurched again and this time there was no stopping what came next. Everything in hiccup's stomach came up, food bile, liquid; everything." Shaking hiccup wiped his mouth, next to him Aria spoke. "You ok?" hiccup nodded and wiped his mouth again. "There is nothing fouler than what I just saw." Aria chuckled. "Keep telling yourself th-" but the rest of what Aria said was cut off by another horrific howl.

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They were running again, the polished stone walls never seemed to end, only change direction. Rounding a corner hiccup watched Aria

ducked as another slizard attacked. Drawing his sword hiccup spun around as more slizards came at them from behind. Grabbing Neya's wrist hiccup pushed her behind him and brought his sword up as the pale hoard threw itself at them. The battles were fast but tiring. The slizards did not carry weapons, instead opting to throw themselves enmass. Slashing throw the mass of bodies hiccup jerked his head towards Aria as she let out a yelp. He watched as a slizard grabbed her by the wrist only to receive a dagger to the face; only to have another slizard grab the dying slizard and pull it away so it could attack Aria. "NEYA STAY BY ME!" hiccup fought his way through the hoard. It seemed like thousands of slizards were attacking them; yet somehow he managed to get near Aria and keep her from becoming over whelmed. His blade felt splattered and sliced of blood on the wall of the tunnel as he attacked the slizard.

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It was while he was off balance that it happened. his sword hand was above his head, he was left exposed. He felt a slizard grab his wrist and pull it at an awkward angle; and before he could react he felt the slizard bite down on his armored arm. When he had been young he'd once dropped a large rock on his arm; that feeling came flooding back as the slizard's jaw crashed down against his arm. A split second later hiccup let out a scream of pain as he felt something long and sharp pierce his skin and go into his muscle. Pain blasted its way through his body, so strong that his vision blurred and his muscled locked up. Then in a flash the pain was gone, and instead hiccup felt his shield grow white hot; while a single thought appeared in his mind. Hiccup slashed the slizard who had bit him before turning and hurling his shield through the corridor like a discus. A moment later he grabbed Neya by the shoulder and pushed her to the ground while shouting for Aria to do the same. The sound of his voice had barely begun to echo when he felt the entire corridor shudder. Off in the distance where he'd thrown his shield; a pinprick of light appeared only to grow and expand. The air in the corridor became filled with a bellow of rage that made the air around them shake, and pulse with power. Soon that bellow was joined by the screams of the slizards.

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Chancing a glance hiccup felt his eyes widen as he watched the entire mass of attacking slizards burned away by a massive fire ball; the center of which was his shield. But the fire ball was growing weaker now, and hiccup felt pain beginning to ebb back into his body as he slowly staggered to his feet and looked down at Neya. His eyes widened as he found that she was ghostly pale, a blossom of red on her arm showed him that she too had been bitten at some point during the fight. "Aria—we have a problem." bending down hiccup picked up Neya and turned to face Aria only to shout at her as his eyes found a single slizard had survived and was approaching her from behind. He watched as Aria spun around to attack only to have the slizard grab

her by the face and attack her; its mouth clamping down on the side of her neck. But a split second later the slizard let go as Aria slashed at its throat nearly taking its head off. He watched as Aria dropped to her knees and looked up at him. black lines were starting to spread across her face; a sign that whatever poisons the slizard's had were inside her system. Hiccup tried to take a step forward but felt fresh pain blast through his body again. He staggered and almost dropped Neya who landed on top of him. Every nerve and fiber in his body was on fire and at the same time freezing cold. Trying to move was impossible as his muscles continuously locked up, relaxed and then locked up again.

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He could hear movement now, shuffling and running; more slizards probably. Hiccup's head rolled back against the cold stone floor. He was looking towards the sounds now. Lights danced in front of hiccup's eyes making it appear as though fireworks were exploding in front of him. a sign that his brain was beginning to overload from the pain that had crippled him. and yet through the fireworks hiccup saw movement. He did his best to focus on this and was rewarded with the sight ofâ€¦..nude women? hiccup's breathing was ragged now, almost painful. He watched in a trance from the pain as the indeed nude women neared him before bending down and lifting him off the ground. His head rolled uselessly until he was looking down at the ground; he felt his vision blur; the last thought that passed through his head was off his mother.

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AN: WELL FOLKS CHAPTER IS UP AND DONE. SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG.

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FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE NOT NOTICED THIS STORY NOW HAS SOME COVER ART. AN ANONYMOUS READER MADE THE PICTURE AND SENT IT TO ME. THANK YOU; WHOEVER YOU ARE.

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SO WHAT'S GUNNA HAPPEN WITH ASTRID? WILL SHE MAKE THE DEAL, OR REFUSE THE MAN?

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AND WHY IS HICCUP SEEING NUDE WOMEN WHILE HE DIES?

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YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT TILL THE NEXT CHAPTER TO FIND OUT.

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A BIT THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO WROTE TO ME AND GOT ME TO WRITE THIS CHAPTER.

HOPEFULLY THE NEXT ONE WONT TAKE AS LONG.

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AS ALWAYS REVIEWS ARE WANTED/NEEDED

7. Oma, poisons, and astrid's deal

NOT SURE HOW MANY OF YOU NOTICED BUT I DELETED THE AUTHOR'S MESSAGE CHAPTER AND THEN POSTED A NEW CHAPTER. SO IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE SO; GO BACK TO CHAPTER 6 AND READ IT. OK ON WITH THE STORY.

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CHAPTER 7

BIRK

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Astrid shifted nervously from leg to leg. Looking around her she found that she was completely alone. All around her the tree rustled from the small breeze but other than a few birds on the far side of the clearing she was completely alone. "hello? Umâ€¦|" silently she bit her lip. She did not know the mysterious man's name. "ummmâ€¦|.strange man?" another small breeze moved for the trees and for a moment Astrid found herself completely surrounded by the

movement of the leaves in the trees, and the leaves that had fallen and were now drifting through the air. "Strange? I think I'm more eccentric." Astrid nearly jumped out of her skin as the voice spoke from right behind her. Whipping around Astrid moved to draw her blade from her belt only to find her sword was gone from its sheath, and in the hands of the mysterious man who had appeared seemingly out of thin air. Astrid glared at the man who shrugged. "what? You expect me to get stabbed for responding to your call?"

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Astrid rolls her eyes and held out her hand, a moment later the blade was returned to her. As she put the blade back in its sheath the man spoke. "butâ€¦I don't see the book with you. Why have you called me here, if not to give me the book and complete our deal?" Astrid folded her arms in front of her. "I want to be sure you can give me exactly what I want." The man cocked his head to the side a small grin starting to play across his face. "What is it that you want girly?" Astrid smirked at him. "I want the same power hiccup has. He cheated and got the skills and abilities without doing any of the work the rest of us have to do. So it's only fair that someone who's worked just as hard be rewarded in a similar way. I want the same power hiccup has. That's my price for this book." The man raised an eyebrow and chuckled. "Seems fair. But I should tell you I cannot give you the same power hiccup has, because I don't understand the power that hiccup now hasâ€¦however-" before Astrid could respond the man thrust out his hands, sending blasts of dark billowing clouds towards her. Astrid gasped as she felt her body lifted up into the air the dark clouds wrapped tightly around her pinning her arms to her sides.

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Below the man continued to speak. "your terms are fair Astrid so I'll give you this gift." Astrid felt the clouds tighten around her body making her gasp in pain as several of her joints popped and cracked under the pressure. Astrid watched fearful as the clouds began to move upwards covering her neck and slowly covering her face. Opening her mouth to scream Astrid gagged and coughed as the dark clouds forced their way into her mouth and into her body. It was like ice cold water being poured into her. "I'll give you a taste of the power, just enough to make you feelâ€¦special." Astrid felt her hands clench and unclench as icy cold pain blasted through her body. It felt like her skin was on fire, and at the same time her insides were freezing cold. She felt like she was going to die and thenâ€¦Astrid yelped as suddenly the dark clouds vanished letting her drop to a heap on the ground. She staggered to her feet every muscle in her body trembling, her heart was racing, and her skin was drenched in sweat from the pain. Drawing her sword Astrid moved to point it at the man, only to find that as she pulled it from its sheath the blade tore in two. Staring at the jagged edge of her blade she heard the man speak. "you'll find you're now stronger, faster,

and much more durable than you were before." Looking up at the man Astrid continued to listen.

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"however you'll find that this power, will not last. I've given you a taste of power, but this taste will only last 38 hours. After that I want your answer. If it's yes then I'll give you the same power but a lot more, and it will last until the day you die. Now do enjoy your new found power. And try not to kill anyone or anything on accident." A second later Astrid flinched as a sound louder than anything she'd ever heard before cut through the air. As she regained her composure she found that the mysterious man was gone. Looking around the clearing Astrid absentmindedly flexed her hands. She felt a strange, like her skin was tingling and covered in thousands of small ants. Turning around the clearing Astrid eyes a large boulder a little ways away from her. Walking over to the boulder Astrid placed her hands on the boulder and began to try and lift it. she expected the boulder to resist her grip, she expected the boulder to not move. What she did not expect was the boulder to not only move; but move with ease. With almost no effort Astrid, not only lifted the boulder up onto its side but with a small push was able to flip the boulder onto its back, making the ground shake as it landed. Flexing her hands Astrid smiled. Things were going to be very interesting now.

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HICCUP'S POV

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Hiccup groaned as feeling began to return to his body. All around him he could hear a kind of soft humming that seemed to make his bones vibrate. Struggling to open his eyes hiccup found that someone had placed a small cool rag over his face. Slowly hiccup tried to move his right arm only to feel white hot pain lance through it; so strong that he let out a gasp of pain. "You're awake." A moment later someone removed the rag and hiccup found himself looking up at a rocky ceiling. After a moment the pain in hiccup's arm faded and began to look around the room. It was sparsely decorated with only a small basin of water, and the mat he was laying on as the only bits of furniture in the room. However his eyes fell to the source of the voice that had spoken before. The source turned out to a woman sitting next to him. The woman was skinny, almost to the point of looking unhealthy. Her skin was grey and over her left eye an intricate tattoo had been carved into her skin. Her hair was lanky and a bit matted together. Her lips were covered in an odd black

substance that seemed to try and cling together as she spoke. "Good. You're awake. How do you feel?"

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Hiccup moved and tried to sit up; only to have the woman put her hand against the blankets covering him. "Do not move yet. You've been asleep for 5 days. Tell me, do you feel any numbness or tingling in your right arm?" hiccup shook his head. "No. Just a dull pain." The woman smiled. "not uncommon since it's been cut open and had the blood drained from it." hiccup again tried to sit up; this time a bit more urgently and again the woman stopped him. "Relax. Your injury has been treated. You're in no danger here. Tell me what is the last thing you remember?" taking a deep breath hiccup noted the smell reminded him a bit of the mines that were near Birk. "I remember naked women?" the woman smiled. "my daughters." Hiccup blushed slightly. "Your daughters?" the woman nodded. "Yes. They rescued you. Brought you here to me and my family. We brought you back from the brink of death. Watched over you until you would awake." Hiccup nodded. "um thank you? I'm sorry I'm still your daughters?" the woman nodded. "Were naked?" again the woman nodded. "Yes. Did you find them pleasing to your eye?" hiccup was silent but could not help but blush slightly. "Do not worry. My daughters do not care that you have seen them in such a way. In fact some of them have found it rather thrilling." again hiccup blushed. "why were they naked?"

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The woman smiled. "it is our way. Our enemies were not wearing armor so we did not wear armor. Drink this." Hiccup felt the woman offer him a small bowl of water. Drinking from the bowl hiccup felt the cool water run down his dry throat and begin to cool his body. "let's get you up." Hiccup felt the woman grip his shoulder and after a moment of hesitation he was able to sit up allowing the thin blankets covering him to fall away revealing his chest. Glancing down at his arm hiccup's eyes widened as he found a large gash starting at his wrists and traveling up to the crook of his elbow. Dried blood clung to the skin around the gash which had been sewn together with a length of what looked to some kind of animal hair. Next to him the woman spoke. "Slizard poison is very nasty. We had to drain the blood from your arm to prevent it from spreading further." Hiccup looked at her and noted her clothing which was an odd mixture of armor around her neck and shoulders with thin layers of fabric covering her chest and legs. "Is Aria ok?" the woman cocked her head to the side. "Aria? Is that the name of the other dragon knight?" hiccup nodded. The woman was silent for a moment. "She is still unconscious. The poison is attacking her body savagely."

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Hiccup shifted. "I want to see her." The woman shook her head. "In time you may. But not right now. You need to eat something. You've been asleep for 5 days. Your body needs fuel if it is to continue healing itself. Magic can only carry you for so long. Even with your dragon knight endurance." Hiccup opened his mouth to speak; only to be cut off by his stomach giving a loud rumbling. "Ok. Can you help me up?" staggering on his feet hiccup leaned on the strange woman for support. "What's your name?" the woman looked at him. "I have many names. Few of which will mean anything to you; and even few that you could pronounce. For now you may call me Oma." Hiccup looked at her. "Oma?" she nodded. "it means mother." Hiccup nodded. "Ok Oma, Where am I?" Oma was silent for a moment as they left the room they had been in and slowly made their way down a small hallway. "You're about 600 miles from Cinderhall, and about 900 feet straight down into the earth." Hiccup looked sideways at her. "Huh?" Oma smiled, showing rows of teeth filed down to make points. "You're underground. Look." Moving over to the side of the hallway Oma pulled a small curtain aside to show hiccup what was 'outside'. His eyes went wide.

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High above them a large hole in the roof of the cavern allowed a beam of sunlight to illuminate the strange sight around them. They were in a kind of cavern. Below them on the cave floor hiccup could see dozens of bonfires whose light allowed him to make out people walking around. Leaning out the window slightly, hiccup found that he was in a large building that seemed to have been carved directly out of the cave wall. Moving away from the wall hiccup allowed Oma to guide him down the hallway and into another room where a small table had been set up. Sitting down in a chair hiccup watched as Oma snapped her fingers. A moment later hiccup nearly jumped out of his skin as a girl about his age stepped up next to him and set down a small plate of fruit, meat and bread; a small mug of water followed soon after. "Eat. You'll feel better." Hiccup looked nervously at Oma before beginning to eat. As he ate Oma spoke. "Allow me to fill you in on what has happened in the last 5 days. After my daughters found you in the tunnels under Cinderhall they brought you here. I removed the slizard's poison from your body and put you into a coma so your body would heal, and you would not awaken in horrible agony." Taking a small drink from the mug hiccup nodded. "What about Aria? Why isn't she healed by now?" Oma shook her head.

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"the poison in her body was much more potent than the poison in yours. You were probably bitten by a young slizard. It'll be some time before Aria is well enough to wakeâ€¦I will not lieâ€¦I'm unsure if even my magics are powerful enough to heal her." Hiccup

forced himself to remain calm. 'what do you mean?" Oma sighed.
"Imagine every disease known to man concentrated into liquid form. That's what a slizard's venom is. Now imagine this venom, once it enters the body makes its way directly to the heart and in doing so infects every drop of blood the heart pumps. To remove this poison we must alter the flow of blood in her body and direct it towards the 'letting wounds' we put on her body. By draining the infected blood before it reaches her heart we lessen the chance that the poison will kill her. But there is still a risk. The human body only has so much blood. If we take too much at once she'll die, and if we don't take enough then the poison will reach her heart and kill her. It isâ€¦difficult to maintain the balance. It's taken 7 of my sisters to keep her alive."

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Hiccup put down the pear core he'd been eating. "Take me to her." Oma shook her head. a second later the table and the food on it went flying as hiccup used his strength and hurled the table away from him. "TAKE ME TO HER!" to her credit Oma did not flinch at the volume of his words; or his anger. She merely raised her hand into the air; almost instantly the table hiccup had hurled across the room froze in mid air and slowly returned to where it had been before hiccup had thrown it. "follow me." standing up hiccup walked awkwardly behind Oma through several passages before emerging into a large room like the one he had awoken in. half a dozen others were in the room. They all sat in a circle, their hands glowing with magic while a single person knelt over Aria and traced patterns into her skin. Aria herself had been stripped naked with only small bits of cloth covering her intimate places. Her arms were places out away from her body and her wrists had been cut and set to allow the blood to drip into two small pots that were already half full. Vaguely hiccup wondered how many pots his blood had filled.

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Hiccup watched as shortly after the women's finger would pass over Aria's skin, a black line would follow. As they came to a stop Oma cleared her throat. The women drawing on Aria looked up and spoke. "The poison is strong. It courses through her veins like a wild animal seeking her heart." Oma spoke. "how much longer?" the women shook her head. "iâ€¦I don't know. A day if she's lucky. A week if she's not. There's no way of telling. All I can say is that her spirit is strong. Even now after 3 days her body is still fighting to evict the poison from her blood." Oma turned to Hiccup. "Satisfied? There is little more you can do for her now. Best to return and finish eating. "Hiccup sighed and allowed himself to be led back to the dining room.

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ASTRID'S POV

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Astrid's heart pounded in her chest. Effortlessly she jumped over the wall of logs that was easily 12 feet high. Rolling when she landed she came up and charged directly at another wall, this one made of stone, shattering it like glass as her body struck it. as the stone was debris showered down on her she lashed out punching massive stones into dust. It felt incredible. Every muscle in her body hummed and pulsed with power. She'd never felt this good before. This was what it meant to be a true warrior; to be a god on the battlefield. "having fun?" she didn't even flinch this time as she turned and found the man who had given her this power, standing behind her. "oh yeah. Lots of fun." The man nodded. "good, good. Now about our deal, your time is up. What will it be? The book for the rest of your power; cause this is only a small taste." Astrid nodded. "sure you can have the book. But I want my powers first." The man nodded. "of course. Brace yourself." Lightning lashed out from the man's fingertips and struck her skin. She bit her lips white hot pain lanced through her body making her want to scream out. Her muscles tense until they felt like they might pull themselves apart. Her heart ached, and tears fell from her eyes as the pain in her body became so much that she almost wished to die so she could escape from it.

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A second later she hit the ground, her knees striking the soft grass under her. Her blood felt like it was boiling as she gasped in lungfuls of cold mountain air. Every muscle, bone, and nerve in her body felt like it had been heating until it was white hot. "The book. Now." Shaking Astrid reached into her pocket and pulled out a leather bound tomb hiccup had compiled. "here. Take it." the man did so chuckling as he opened the book. "It's all here, all of it. The fool. To have written such knowledge down." Shakily Astrid got to her feet. "We're done here, correct?" the man looked at her. "Not yet. There's one more thing I want from you." A second later black smoke erupted from the man's hands and wrapped itself around Astrid who found herself completely paralyzed. The man laughed. "You dumb girl. Why would I give you this kind of power, and then just walk away? No, you're gunna be my new body." Astrid's eyes widened as she watched the man open his mouth only to have more black smoke erupt outwards. She watched horrified as the smoke swirled and writhed and raced towards her, before wrapping itself around her body and moving up towards her face. She opened her mouth to scream; but a moment later wished she hadn't as she felt the smoke lash out and force its way into her mouth and down her throat.

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AN: WELL FOLKS CHAPTER 7 IS UP AND DONE. (AND ON CHRISTMAS EVE NO LESS)

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WELL IT SURELOOKS LIKE ASTRID IS IN DEEP SHIT. WILL Aria OVERCOME THE POISON? AND IS OMA A FRIEND OR FOE?

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YOU'LL HAVE TO KEEP READING TO FIND OUT.

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A BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SENT ME MESSAGES AND NOTES ASKING ME TO KEEP WORKING ON THIS.

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AS ALWAYS REVIEWS ARE WANTED/NEEDED.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS!

End
file.